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N. L. Labranche

to

the Pne: Club.

1833.

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ALICE PAULET:

A SEQUEL TO

SYDENHAM,

OR,

MEMOIRS OF A MAN OF THE WORLD.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "SYDENHAM."

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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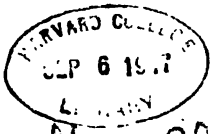

Porcellian Club

ALICE PAULET.

A SEQUEL TO

"SYDENHAM."

CHAPTER I.

It will be in the recollection of the gracious reader, that after the dissolution of Parliament, and consequently of my political hopes and ambition, (if in reality I ever had any, which to me is rather doubtful,) I accepted the pressing invitation of my friends, the Palmers, to pass some time with them at Palmerstown. I went there accordingly, and spent a very agreeable time in the most rational country-house I had as yet ever visited. A country-house is in general a mere miniature edition of town. You find there the same insipid people, the same flimsy conversation, or rather talk; for the intercourse of fashionable society has no claim to that dignified designation: and essentially the same amusements. Palmerstown belonged not to this description. The host was a man of very superior mind, and Lady Eleanor a noble woman, to whom fops and flirts could not but be very distasteful. Their house, therefore, was filled with none of of these, but with persons of sense and talent. I remained with these valued friends about a month; after the lapse of which, I took my departure for Sydenham, not having indeed been pressed to prolong my stay, as Palmer considered a gentleman guilty of neglect of his duty, who did not spend a large share of his time at home, and personally superintend and promote the welfare of his tenantry. He himself was what is rarely met with—a truly practical Whig. The comfort, morality, and happiness of the people within

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N. H. Labranche

to

the Soc: Club.

1833.

After the particulars which I have mentioned respecting Mr. Rock, you will not think it unaccountable that I should feel some surprise at recognizing, in the capacity of one of my servants, an individual whom I had neither seen, nor heard, nor thought of, for the last dozen years; and who, if I had been asked to conjecture of his present condition, I should have promptly guessed to be either in New South Wales, or to be still successful in that course of life to which his disposition so evidently tended. So strong indeed appeared to me either of these probabilities, that I did not altogether trust the evidence of my senses in opposition to them. With the intention, therefore, of ascertaining the fact, I opened the window, walked up to the man and accosted him.

CHAPTER III.

I ADDRESSED myself to the supposed Rock as though I had never seen him before, and his respectful return to my salutation indicated no consciousness of former acquaintance. When I asked him what was his rank and duration in my service, he answered that he was one of the under gardeners, and that he had been hired by Mr. Sloper, the head gardener, about six months ago. Upon observing him closely, I felt convinced that I was not mistaken, for though twelve or fourteen years must have elapsed since I had last seen him, and he had in that interval advanced from the vigour of youth toward middle age, and had acquired a sedate and elderly manner, I always retained a vivid impression of a person to whom I had been once known.

I entered into conversation with him on professional subjects, upon which he met me with great alacrity, and indeed favoured me for a full quarter of an hour unremittingly with horticultural information, until at length I became rather tired of the topic.

"You seem to understand, and be fond of the garden," said I.

"Why yes, Sir Matthew, I hope I understands my business; and as to liking of it, it's quite my hobby, as one may say. I found the place sadly out of order when I first come here, Sir, but I'm getting of it up a bit now, as far as I got the liberty."

"Sloper must find you a useful adviser and assistant," said I, "especially now that he is getting old and infirm, and cannot, I suppose, be so active as formerly."

"Oh no, your Honour," answered the sub, "head-gardeners don't care to be advised by the working men, and if I was to be too forrard with my advice, it might be as much as my place is worth; t'other day, when I ventured to say something of that sort to Mr. Sloper, be told me to mind my own business."

"Well," rejoined I, "you may tell me what are the improvements which you suggest."

"Your honour is very good, for gentlemen don't often listen to the under servants. But as you've given me leave to speak my mind, Sir Matthew, I'll make so bold." He then entered into a detail of his plans, which appeared to me remarkably ingenious, and in very good taste. "I think, Sir," proceeded he, "if we was to make some such alterations as these, the place, please God, would be all the better for them."

"Well," said I, "I shall probably soon pension Sloper off, and if you behave yourself, perhaps I may promote you to his place.

"I humbly thank your Honour."

"Pray," said I, "is not your name Rock?"

"Yes, Sir Matthew," he replied, in a subdued and conscious tone.

"I remember you," I proceeded, "and from what you were a dozen years ago, I certainly did not expect that you would have turned out such a steady industrious man as you now appear to be."

"I hope, Sir, your honour won't think the worse of me now for what I might have been when I was young and had no sense."

"On the contrary, I think the more highly of you for resisting your evil dispositions, and becoming what you are, —I hope a sober and honest man; but I should like to know how this was brought about, and what you have been doing for several years past."

Thereupon he very frankly gave me an account of himself from the period at which I lost sight of him. He said that he continued in his idle and wild course of life until his evil genius tempted him to kill a hare one day on Lord Daventry's estate. For this offence he was had up before his lordship and another justice, who convicted and sentenced him to the House of Correction for three months. His disgrace had a fatal effect upon his father, who was a respectable man, and had been bitterly afflicted by the worthlessness of his son.

"I was terribly cut up, your Honour," said Rock, "by the death of my poor father, for I felt that I was the cause of it, and that I had brought his gray hairs in sorrow to the grave. I now, for the first time in my life, began to have some thought, and to repent of my wickedness and folly. But at the same time my blood boiled against those tyrannical lords and gentlemen who would rather see a man hang, and

an honest family ruined, than be deprived of the pleasure of killing a bird or an animal: so that when I came out of prison I was doubtful whether I would at once reform my bad habits and work hard to support my poor mother, who had been brought to the parish by my misfortune, or hang myself, or shoot Lord Daventry. But, thank God, I overcame such bad thoughts, and determined to turn all my attention to my mother, when I found, poor soul! that she also had been brought, by grief and distress, to death's door, shame at being reduced from comfort and respectability, in her old days, to the poor-house having broke her heart, and that she was not expected to live over many days. I found likewise the whole village in arms against me; I was everywhere called the murderer of my parents; and in short I was so abused (except by one person,) that I was obliged to leave the neighbourhood even before the poor old woman breathed her last.

"Well, Sir, I went away, as you may suppose, sorrowful enough, and indeed I was so desperate low that I do believe I should have made away with me myself if I hadn't been kept up by vowing revenge against him who, I couldn't help thinking, had by his cruel punishment helped to bring all this misery upon me; and even to this day, Sir Matthew, though I thank the Lord I have no longer any sinful desire for revenge, I can't say that I like a bone in one of the bodies of that lord's family; for flesh is flesh, and one can't help one's feelings, though one may strive against them.

"I need not trouble your honour," resumed Rock, after he had paused to collect breath and wipe his brow, moistened by the earnestness with which he had related his wrongs and misfortunes,—"I need not trouble your honour to tell you all the rubs and hardships I met with—how, when—upon leaving the village I went to look for work at a parish a few miles off, and they asked me to give an account of myself—I hesitated,—because I was loth to tell the truth—they committed me to Bridewell as a rogue and vagabond, and many other such like punishments which they inflicted on me for being poor and friendless. However, I bore it all, for, thought I, I can't suffer more than I deserve for the misery which I caused to my poor parents by my idleness and vice.

"In this way passed a matter of three year, Sir Matthew, and I do believe the Lord was pleased with my repentance and patience, for about that time, when I was in the greatest,

distress, I fell in with a gentleman who was the salvation of me, I may say, both body and soul."

On this part of his story my *ci-devant* friend Rock was rather prolix; the substance of his details was, that his new friend was a gentleman of a "serious turn," that is, a Methodist. A reprobate young fellow, who had caused the death of his parents by his wickedness, and had been the inhabitant of a gaol, must have been a great prize to a secretary of a Missionary Society, and accordingly the righteous person practised upon this favourable subject with such zeal, that in a few days he succeeded in making him a proselyte—although it was doubtful from his narrative, whether the latter was actuated more by interest, or pure conviction, for his becoming a convert was a *sine qua non* of his being admitted into the service of the godly gentleman, whose arguments must have found a responsive echo in the empty stomach of poor Rock. However, although there might have been a reasonable doubt of his sincerity at first, it appeared that he subsequently fully adopted the principles of his master, in whose service he continued to his great comfort and edification for nine years, about which time his patron dying, he felt a strong disposition to return to his native place. He did so, and was congratulated by his neighbours upon the happy change which the Lord had wrought in him; they kindly inquired into the state of his affairs, and having ascertained that he had saved up a small sum of late years, invited him again to take up his residence among them; generously consented to bury all his former faults in oblivion, with such consoling observations as, "we must forget and forgive—we've all got our faults—and the wildest youths sometimes turned out the best men," &c.

"And so, your honour, I bought an acre or two and a small cottage, and soon fitted myself with a wife, an industrious young woman, the daughter of a farmer who could give her a bit of money. I had known her afore my misfortunes, and she had remained faithful to me throughout. I've now got a small family growing up about me, but, please God, being a new man, I shall do well, with your honour's kind favour and countenance."

CHAPTER IV.

I HAD not been returned to the country a week, when I received a letter, dated Bath, from Mrs. Mitchell. It began by informing me with grief and pain, that my dearest mother had lately been far from well; it then proceeded to confess that she had been very ill; the next gradation of disclosure entreated me to summon fortitude to bear the still more distressing intelligence which it was to communicate, viz. that my beloved parent had had a paralytic stroke. The last degree of the process of *breaking* gave me to understand that I must use the utmost despatch if I wished to see my mother alive.

Of course I made preparations for immediate departure, although the reader will hardly expect, considering the sort of person my mother was and the terms upon which we had been, that I should profess myself greatly afflicted by the contents of this letter. Decency, however, requires some hypocrisy in these cases; for if I were to declare myself indifferent to the image of my parent upon her death-bed, I should be exclaimed against as a monster by all good people, who are satisfied if an elder son only conceals his joy at the demise of a well-jointured mother, under "a dejected behaviour of visage." And certainly he would be a silly fellow who would not preserve his character at so small a sacrifice as the supression of the outward manifestation of his feeling; for every day's experience proves the absurdity of the old woman's proverb, that "honesty is the best policy." I beg therefore it may be understood, that throughout the business I was careful in my observance of "all forms, modes, and shows of grief," so much so indeed, that Mrs. Mitchell herself could not reasonably have found fault with my conduct in this particular. Perhaps, indeed, it may be objected, that I cannot claim any benefit from this assurance, having placed myself in the same situation as an actor in a tragedy would be in, if he were, before entering upon a pathetic scene, to remind the audience that it was a mere fictitious representation. To this possible objection I reply, that, although the

above remark may have been gratuitous on my part, yet he has no right to blame me for dispelling an illusion, which it was his own folly, if he believed it to be real.

Upon arriving in Bath, I left the carriage at the hotel, and proceeded alone to my mother's residence, which was in the upper part of the town. When I approached the house, I perceived by a glance at the windows that the fatal event had not yet taken place, for the shutters were unclosed. I rang the bell, the knocker being muffled, and the door was opened by the old servant of my mother, a man who had been in the family many years.

"I'm glad to see you here at last, Sir Matthew," said he, rather reproachfully; "my lady's alive, and that's all."

"I hope everything has been done in my absence, Reynolds; the first intimation I received of her illness was yesterday."

"Indeed, Sir Matthew!" answered Reynolds with surprise; "my poor lady was struck last Tuesday week, and the doctor said from the first she could never recover."

"But how is it I wasn't sent for immediately?"

"I'm sure I can't tell, Sir Matthew; Mrs. Mitchell have managed it all;" and the old man looked mysterious and significant.

I asked no more questions, but hurried up stairs; the drawing-room door being open, I entered it, and beheld Mrs. Mitchell standing at a table in the act of placing a seal upon a writing desk; I observed that the same precaution had been used with a work-box, a cabinet, and other articles in the room. Mrs. Mitchell and I recognized each other simultaneously.

"Oh, Sir Matthew!" cried she, dropping the sealing-wax from her hand, and advancing to greet me, "I'm grieved to renew my acquaintance with you under such melancholy circumstances. I'm afraid there's no hope, and that you must be prepared for the worst." And she heaved a deep sigh.

I uttered some expression of concern, and she proceeded.

"In another respect I am most happy to see you here, for your coming relieves me from a great responsibility; I should have written for you earlier, but I was reluctant to shock your feelings, while there was the least chance of my dearest friend's recovery. Ever since she was taken ill, I have scarcely ever left her, and, indeed, have slept in the house, though I declare to you, Sir Matthew, I had a repugnance at

first to do so; people are so ill-natured in this city, always ready to impute odious motives; but knowing the purity of my own intentions, and that you at least would see my conduct in the proper light, I overcame such selfish scruples, really thinking it my duty to be near the dear soul, to pay her those little attentions which seldom occur even to the best of servants, which, I'm sorry to say, between ourselves, your mother's are not. I've often thought it was fortunate that she had some disinterested friend near her; for, dear soul! they would take advantage of her kind easy temper, and impose on her dreadfully, if they were not overlooked. For this reason I know they hate me, but I don't mind that; however, it's a great relief to me that you are come, as I now resign this melancholy task (pointing to the seals) to you, which I was only doing lest (a deep sigh) anything should have happened before your arrival; in which case, if this precaution were not taken, there would, I fear, be sad pillage."

"My dear Mrs. Mitchell," I replied, "I feel much indebted to you for your kind care and consideration; and I am sure you are one who would not be deterred from pursuing the path of duty by the calumnies of Bath gossips. I hope your son is well; I perceived by the papers a few weeks ago, that he had been ordained."

"Oh yes, and passed his examination with great *éclat*."

"He is a very clever young man," said I, "and as amiable, I believe, as clever?"

"Indeed he is, Sir Matthew; and I should think little of his talent if amiability wasn't joined with it; for as dear Lady Sydenham used to say, 'What's all the talent in the world without goodness?' He preached at St. Margaret's last Sunday, and such a beautiful discourse as he gave—I wish you had been here to hear it. It was on the uncertainty of life; and he brought in your dear mother in such an affecting manner, that I was in floods of tears, and so were many others. I certainly *am* proud of my Edmund, I must confess."

"You have good reason, I think; I hope I shall see him; my mother, I know, was very fond of him."

"She was very kind to him, and he had a great respect and affection for her; he administered the last awful rites of religion to her yesterday, and you can't think how he was affected, poor fellow!"

I asked if I could see my mother; to which Mrs. Mitchell

answered that she would go and ascertain, desiring me to remain where I was until her return.

She had not left the room a minute, when there was a gentle rap at the door, followed immediately by the appearance of a lady, gaily dressed in silk gown, lace cap, and luxuriant ringlets, in whom I recognized my mother's waiting-woman. She courtsied low, and advanced with a smirking sad expression of countenance: "If you please, Sir Matthew," said she, after a moment's hesitation, and with downcast eyes, "I am my Lady's maid."

"I recollect you perfectly well," answered I; "Mrs. Fisher."

"Yes, Sir Matthew." She paused again, but finding that I made no remark, proceeded:

"I takes the liberty of speaking to you, Sir, to hope you'll be so good as not to listen to no complaints which Mrs. Mitchell may be making to you, Sir Matthew, about the servants, for she got a great spite against us. I'm sure, and God he knows, that no servant could be more attentive than I was to my poor lady, from the fust moment of her illness. I sat up two whole nights with her, as her ladyship would tell you, Sir, if so be as she could speak; and if she never gets the use of her vice again—which I pray God she may, though I'm afeard there an't no chance—she'd say as how we paid her every attention and kindness as far as lied in our power. We was going on as quiet and comfortable as anything, and my lady was getting better, when Mrs. Mitchell come and took it all into her own hand, and would'nt let any body come anighst her ladyship except herself; for what reasons, God he knows."

She stopped here, but I continued silent, and the Abigail resumed:

"So I only hope, Sir Matthew, you'll be so kind as to condescend not to listen to no tell-tales, for one story's good till another's told." Here Mrs. Fisher made another pause, but I was not disposed at that time to give her encouragement, and she was reluctantly retiring, when the door suddenly opened, and Mrs. Mitchell entered the room. She darted a glance of surprise and anger at the waiting-woman, in whom I observed a correspondent look, not certainly indicative of the most profound respect.

"Well, Fisher," said Mrs. Mitchell, "what are you doing here?"

"I was speaking to Sir Matthew, ma'am."

"Speaking to Sir Matthew! What could you have to say to Sir Matthew, I should like to know! Upon my word, I'm surprised at your assurance; if you had any thing to say to this gentleman, it would have been more becoming in you to have communicated it through me: if you don't know your place, you must be told it, so pray leave the room immediately."

The waiting-woman, however, hesitated to obey this command, and muttered indistinct rebellion.

"Do you hear? quit the room, I say," reiterated Mrs. Mitchell, with that contraction of brow and decision of tone, which was intended to crush sedition in the bud.

"I shan't leave the room for you," answered the maid, who had been somewhat discomfited at first, but had now recovered her courage; "you an't my missis, and got no right to order me about: if Sir Matthew orders me out of the room, I shall go; but if not, I shall bide and say what I got to say, for I don't want to go behind backs."

Mrs. Mitchell appealed to me with uplifted hands if I had ever heard such impertinence. Then turning toward the undaunted Abigail, and regarding her as if she wanted words to express the mingled emotions of indignation and scorn which were depicted in her countenance, she presently exclaimed, "You insolent woman! how dare you behave in this manner to me and Sir Matthew? What do you mean by such language? are you not ashamed of yourself?"

"Let them as got better cause than I be ashamed," retorted the waiting-woman; "I ha'nt done nothing to be ashamed or afeard of, I thank God. You needn't betwit me with any conduct, ma'am; you'd better look at home for that."

"Look at home, woman! what do you mean by such language? I don't understand you—do you know whom you are speaking to?"

"Yes, ma'am, I does know whom I am speaking to; and I know what I means."

"Speak out! I insist upon it!" vociferated Mrs. Mitchell, with a flaming face; "tell all you know; I defy you, wretch!"

"Wretch, indeed!" repeated Mrs. Fisher, with great disdain; "if the truth was know'd, we should see who was the wretch, I believe: I didn't put myself between a mother and her own flesh and blood. I wasn't the one to stuff my lady's head up with stories about this and that, and tell her as Sir

Matthew didn't care a farden about her, as my lady has said to me many's the time, and I've begged her not to mind sech stories, for I was sure as how Sir Matthew loved her dearly."

"I'm sure I haven't the least idea what she's talking about," said Mrs. Mitchell, turning to me with an admirable air of unconsciousness," "I think the woman must be out of her senses, or, which is most likely, in liquor, and knows not what she is saying herself."

"No, ma'am," cried the Abigail with great warmth, "I'm not in liquor, and that you knows. I defy any body to say a drop of drink ever goes within my lips, except 'tis with my victuals, and then I haves only my half-pint of beer at dinner and supper: but you don't like to hear the truth—that's what 'tis. I thank God, as I said afore, I've got a clear conscience, and haven't interfered with no person's rights, nor used *indue hinfluence*—that's all."

"My dear Sir Matthew," said Mrs. Mitchell, addressing me with a smile, "perhaps I am wrong in treating this person's abominable insinuations with any other than silent contempt; but I may as well tell you the cause of her malice towards me. When I became acquainted with Lady Sydenham, I found her absolutely a prey of her unprincipled servants, and really thinking it my duty, I put her on her guard against their malpractices, for which reason they have of course ever since detested me. It was but yesterday, that, to my surprise and horror, I detected this woman pillaging the wardrobe of your dear mother before the breath was out of her. I instantly put a seal on the locks, and was so shocked by the indecent rapacity of the creature, that I declared my intention of acquainting you with the circumstance. Hence you see her spite against me."

"It's a scandalous untruth," snivelled the maid; "I hadn't no thought of any such thing; I'm sure I was only putting my lady's things to rights, as was my place. But you wants to have what's my rights, that's what 'tis, and I say it to your face: you're a pretty kind of a lady to go for to take away a poor servant's parquisites! I've lived in places afore this, and have known other ladies' maids, and never heerd of one who was prevented taking the clothes when 'twas please God to take her lady. But, Sir Matthew, as stands there, is a gentleman every inch, and he wo'n't suffer a poor servant to be imposed upon because she ha'n't got the means of standing up for herself. I've got a caricter to lose, and I'll have you

to know ma'am, if you says anything against me, I'll make you prove your words—I will." So saying, she retired toward the door, I having been for the last minute or two motioning her to withdraw. Mrs. Mitchell, who, during the speeches of the waiting-womon, had frequently expressed, both by word and look, horror, astonishment, scorn, and indignation, now stood apparently irresolute, whether to discharge all her rage at the retreating Abigail, or to prefer ineffable contempt. After a short struggle, however, she decided upon the latter, and casting upon her opponent a look of supreme disdain, she said, "Miserable creature, you are beneath my notice!" To which the other replied, only with an insulting laugh, and left the room. Under other circumstances, such a scene as this might have amused me, but placed as I was, I could not but feel disgusted with it. The relation in which the toadeater and the waiting-woman stood with regard to each other, was evidently that of virulent rivalry; and the exhibition of it at such a time, though strongly expressive, was too revolting to be witnessed by a person in my situation, supposing me to be utterly destitute of feeling, and to possess only a moderate sense of decency.

As soon as her antagonist had disappeared, Mrs. Mitchell, aware that the attitude which she had assumed during the altercation was unbecoming, if not suspicious, began to apologize to me for what had taken place, declaring that she was more shocked on my account than her own, for as to herself, her own heart acquitted her of any such vile aspersions; but how must my feelings have been wounded by the conduct of that vulgar, unprincipled wretch! She then informed me that she had found my mother asleep, and consequently advised me to postpone seeing her until the morrow. To this suggestion I consented, and readily giving Mrs. Mitchell the required assurance that she had not been affected in my estimation by the insinuations of the waiting-woman, I took my leave and returned to the hotel.

CHAPTER V.

EARLY on the following morning I sent my own servant to inquire for Lady Sydenham. He returned after a long absence, with a note from Mrs. Mitchell, informing me that the sad but expected event had taken place—my mother was no more. She had expired a few minutes before the arrival of my inquiries.

I shall pass over all minor details, and merely relate, that on the fourth day after the decease of my mother, such members of the family as had arrived for that purpose, assembled in the parlour to hear the reading of the will. A brother, and a nephew of Lady Sydenham's, were her only kindred present, besides myself. Mrs. Mitchell sat with mournful countenance and tearful eyes. Her son's features were likewise set to the proper expression of grief, and the white handkerchief which he held in his hand, was used at regular intervals. The solicitor took his seat at the table, and informed the company, that by the endorsement it appeared that the document which he held in his hand, was the last will and testament of the deceased Dame Martha Sydenham, and that it was addressed to the Rev. Edmund Mitchell, B. A. of Magdalen College, Oxford, sole executor. He then handed the paper to that gentleman, who broke the seal, and returning it to the man of business, requested that he would read it aloud; who proceeded to do so accordingly.

The purport of this document was pretty much as I had expected. A funded property of 18,000*l.* was divided into three equal portions; one of which was assigned to Mrs. Mitchell, and another to her son. The remainder was distributed among my uncle, three cousins, the servants, and two religious and charitable institutions. To her "dear son, Sir Matthew Sydenham," she bequeathed a seal-ring of his grandfather's, in token of remembrance and affection. This was my only legacy, for though she left me her plate and jewels they devolved to me of right, as well as her jointure, she having only a life interest therein. The valuable advowson of which she was proprietor, Lady Sydenham bequeathed to her brother, strictly enjoining, that upon the death of the

present incumbent, her amiable and valued young friend, the Rev. Edmund Mitchell, should be presented thereto. Her favourite Angola cat she reccommended to the care and affection of her dearest friend, Mrs. Caroline Mitchell.

The emotions which these bequests produced in the several persons interested, were visibly betrayed in their countenances, as the provisions were successively pronounced in the clear and equable tones of the attorney. Mrs. Mitchell indeed kept her eyes bent meekly downward, and not a muscle of her features moved, when she heard herself named to such large legacies, but she only shook her head in silent grief whenever her name was mentioned in the will with extraordinary terms of affection. The reverend young gentleman, her son, did not venture to relax the accurately lugubrious expression into which he had disciplined his face, upon first entering the room, and only used his handkerchief more freely during the perusal of the will—especially at those parts of it which particularly affected himself. But my uncle's countenance first denoted astonishment, and then indignation, while that of my cousin manifested angry disappointment. At every new item of the deceased's liberality toward the mother and son, they regarded them with furious looks of hatred and contempt, and when the reading was concluded, my uncle, who was a coarse man, walked up to Mrs. Mitchell, and thrusting his hands under the flap of his coat, addressed her with a grin.

"Well, ma'am, I wish you joy, and you too, Sir," (to the clergyman,) "you've come in for pretty pickings, by G—;" and then, without waiting for an answer, he turned round, and addressed himself to me.

"What do you say to it, Matthew?—Your mother was always a queer woman; but d—n me if ever I knew any thing like this. I strongly suspect foul play, and I don't care who hears me!"

Before I could reply, Mrs. Mitchell burst forth.

"Foul play! Good heavens, Sir, what can you mean? do your insinuations apply to me?"

"If the cap fits you, you may wear it, ma'am. I insinuate nothing but what I say, I say; and it shan't rest with mere words either, I promise ye, if there's law or justice in the land. Nephews, I repeat that my impression is, undue influence has been used; and I think the circumstance of her leaving away the bulk of her property to strangers, and cutting out,

for no earthly reason whatever, her own nearest relatives, would of itself go strong to prove it before any judge or jury in England."

Here the attorney took leave to observe, that it was erroneous to suppose, that circumstance by itself, would be *prima facie* evidence of undue influence, and was proceeding very learnedly to argue the point, when my uncle cut him short.

"And who asked you to put in your word? keep your opinion till it's paid for, which it never will be by me; so hold your tongue if you please, and if you can't, there's the door. Nephews, I ask you again, will you join me to bring this will into court? for, take my word for it, all isn't as it should be here."

"I'm very willing," answered my cousin. I kept silence for the present.

"Good gracious! what can be the meaning of this?" cried Mrs. Mitchell—"Edmund, how can you sit by and hear us insulted in this manner?—why don't you speak?"

"Really, gentlemen," said Mr. Mitchell, at this appeal, "this is very extraordinary conduct—I don't understand."

"I'm sure," sobbed his mother, "I never was treated in such a way in my life before. I use undue influence! Gracious heavens!" and she lifted up her eyes and hands—"no one could be more surprised than myself at finding that my dear departed friend had left me such munificent tokens of her regard and affection; but I declare solemnly if her only legacy had been that poor animal, I should have cherished and valued it as a thing she loved." And as she spoke, Mrs. Mitchell lifted the cat, which was slumbering on the rug, in her arms, and bestowed upon it many caresses, a proceeding which my incensed uncle noticed only with an interjection of contempt and ridicule.

At this juncture I interfered, observing that as all parties seemed rather heated, a continued discussion could be neither profitable nor agreeable, and therefore I moved an adjournment. This proposal was acceded to; the Mitchells retired, exclaiming at their maltreatment and protesting their innocence; my uncle and cousin withdrew, grumbling, cursing, and uttering vehement threats. I returned to my hotel, pondering upon what I had seen and heard.

CHAPTER VI.

I WAS strongly urged by my uncle to join him and his nephew, in an endeavour to set aside my mother's will; but I declined; for though the servants seemed quite prepared to support the case, as far as swearing to anything we might suggest; yet the learned counsel, whose opinion I took, dissuaded me from founding an action upon their testimony. Indeed, though I was well persuaded that Mrs. Mitchell had virtually dictated the terms of the will, and though I felt a strong desire to disappoint and punish her, motives of delicacy withheld me from making the matter public, especially as they were not counteracted by cupidity, for my present fortune more than satisfied all my wants, to say nothing of the considerable addition made thereto by the devolution of my mother's jointure. My uncle was much chagrined and enraged at my determination, which made his menaces idle; for the projected suit could not be prosecuted without my concurrence. He did not hesitate to insinuate accordingly that I was in league with the Mitchells, and that they had surrendered to me a part of their gains as hush-money. Neither entreaties nor aspersions could, however, persuade me, and my uncle and cousin left Bath immediately, their rage and disappointment not suffering them to wait even for the funeral.

My uncle's insinuation that I had been bribed by the Mitchells was not improbable, for the day after the reading of the will, I received an overture from the lady to that effect. It was contained in a letter pathetically expressive of wounded feelings at the scene of the preceding day, and declaratory of the writer's conviction that I was no party to the outrage which had been committed on her by my uncle. Mrs. Mitchell then proceeded to say, "that if I considered the testimonials of regard which her dear departed friend had bequeathed to her and to her son were unreasonably ample, they were ready to give themselves up to my justice and generosity, by resigning into my hands any share of their respective legacies to which I might consider myself enti-

tled." The letter concluded with many earnest protestations of esteem and respect, and entreated my protection against the brutal and indecent insults of Lady Sydenham's brother. To this letter I returned an answer cold and succinct, declining her proposal, and disclaiming any intention of disputing my mother's will.

As soon as I had performed the last duties towards my deceased parent, I returned to the country, resolving to give myself up during the days of mourning to retirement and books. These grateful pursuits, which should form the staple of the happiness of every intellectual being—and no happiness can be permanent, equal, sterling, or honourable, which does not proceed from the mind—had been too long abandoned by me, for I had of late very sensibly experienced the unwholesome effects of their neglect in an appetency for excitement, together with a repugnance to the means by which it was procured, and a dissatisfaction, amounting sometimes almost to remorse, after the temporary elevation had subsided, in a sinking of the tone of thought and feeling which I had formerly enjoyed, and a dislike to my species rapidly advancing to misanthropy. To confess a fact which I have never before even hinted at, when I entered the busy world after the death of my father, I was not without a lurking hope that I should be induced, if not to change, to admit a modification of the unfavourable opinion I had formed of human nature; at least I indulged an expectation that in general society I should meet with some exceptions to the prevailing character, an intercourse with whom might call forth those gentle and general sympathies which, although I have stated the contrary, I was fain to believe existed in my bosom, though repressed by my extreme, and perhaps morbid fastidiousness. The persons whom I encountered, and the scenes which I witnessed, when I became a MAN OF THE WORLD, have been faithfully described in the foregoing part of my memoirs, and I leave the candid reader to judge, whether they were more calculated to confirm a person of my disposition in his morosity, or to encourage him in indulgent feelings towards mankind. Possibly the Metcalfes, the Oliphants, and the Mitchells may have caused me to view the world with a jaundiced eye, which gave a false colouring to the motives, and, it may be, even to the actions of persons with whom I came in contact; but of this I can assure the reader, that however I might have talked, when in town, of the gratification of my satirical propensities, I was sensible of the

existence of more amiable feelings, the satisfaction of which would have afforded me a higher degree of pleasure. However, be this as it may, I was now either tired of ridiculing and deriding my species, or else I felt a secret conviction that such a practice was detrimental to my own happiness, for I was wholly without a desire again to meet with similar subjects for the exercise of my sarcastic powers, and I diligently recapitulated and carefully examined my past experience, in order to discover, if possible, any error in the opinions which I had drawn therefrom. But my investigation did not terminate in the desired result; for conscience forbade me to entertain a doubt that human nature, and consequently the world, were radically and principally bad.

CHAPTER VII.

Among the earliest cards of condolences which I received on my return to the country, were those of the Haviland family, the head of which had just been elevated a step in the peerage, in consideration of his having sent in the adhesion of his powerful interest to the new Government. The new Marquess of Daventry accompanied his ceremonial visit with a note, which, after the usual civilities on my recent domestic calamity, proceeded to express the sincere hope of the noble writer and his family, that as the present happy administration had virtually put an end to the invidious distinctions of Whig and Tory, there remained no obstacle to the renewal of those friendly relations which had always hitherto subsisted between the houses of Sydenham and Fletchingley, and the late interruption of which the latter had so much regretted.

To this gracious overture I returned an answer, declaring my oblivion of past differences, and my satisfaction at the prospect of returning to that friendly intercourse which public duty no longer rendered it expedient to suspend.

Certainly nothing renders a man more disposed to complacency and generosity toward a rival, than a complete and permanent triumph over him. Lord Daventry, in addition to his marquisate, had been granted a long lease of Crown lands in N——shire, which effectually closed up the county against any opposing candidate.

In conformity, however, to that resolution which I had formed, and which indeed, decency rendered it incumbent upon me to observe, even if my inclination had not coincided, I declined going into society at present. Weary, as I said before, of viewing human nature with the naked eye, as it were, I retired for awhile to contemplate it through the more chastened, but less instructive, medium of books. I was happy to find that neither my mind nor taste were seriously injured by the debasing tendency of the almost incessant in-

tercourse with the world, in which the last three years of my life had been spent. In the article of poetry only was I sensible of a falling off; for though I had never been of a romantic turn, and perhaps from the early impressions which I had received of human nature, had been a stranger to those beautiful day-dreams which are said to be incident to youth; yet at an early period I had cultivated with much zest an acquaintance with those authors who (in the beautiful language of a modern poet) would lead me

> —— Into the realm of Faery,
> Among the lovely forms of things,
> The shadowy forms of mountains bare,
> And streams, and bowers, and ladies fair—
> The shades of palaces and kings.*

Now, however, I took no lively interest in subjects which treated of matters alien to man and his concerns. This I attributed to that depravation which my taste had lately undergone, but I was encouraged to hope that time and retirement would restore it to its original purity. Shakspeare, of course, held undiminished influence over my mind, even although his writings, contrary to my own experience, went decidedly to exalt rather than degrade human nature; for towards him I felt as sincerely as a politician of the present day professed himself as having regarded an illustrious predecessor, when he said, "that if after having employed all his faculties upon any question, he should arrive at a different conclusion from Mr. Fox, he would resign his own opinion, and adopt that of his master in politics." Such, indeed, was my veneration for him, that if I had really been convinced that he believed in the dignity of the species, I should have believed in it likewise, despite of my own experience and judgment. But he was a poet, and in that character, his business being to excite the higher feelings, he was often obliged to deviate from the path of truth into the regions of imagination. Thus I reconciled my deference to Shakspeare with my own opinions. By Swift also, who had abundant facilities of observing mankind, and whose remarks were made with the acutest penetration, I was powerfully corroborated; for both in his writings and his life, he eminently illustrated the doctrines of which I was persuaded.

* Wordsworth.

As to the moralists who supported the other side of the qu
tion, I was little affected by their arguments, perceiving t
their object was, by any means, to crush tenets which w
inimical to the interests of virtue. And certainly, he v
should wantonly expose the imperfections and frailties
human nature, would be highly censurable, while he w
makes the same exhibition with the view to stimulate
provement and remedy, is worthy of as high approbation.

CHAPTER VIII.

I HAD enjoyed the sweets of study and solitude for about a month, when they were interrupted by the arrival at Sydenham of a person who has not yet been introduced to the reader.

I was sitting reading in the library at the open window, late on a fine evening, when I observed a horseman riding up the avenue at a smart trot. Not being on terms of intimacy with any of my neighbours, I raised my glass to ascertain, if possible, who was coming to pay me a visit at that unusual hour. All that I could perceive, however, was, that the equestrian seemed to be a gentleman, and that he rode a fine horse well and gracefully, but I could not distinguish his person on account of the distance. I had no time indeed to scrutinize his figure, for it was almost immediately lost in a turn of the road, and I could not see him again until he was announced; the room in which I was sitting being at the back of the house.

In a few minutes I heard the horse stop in front, and when I looked toward the door, expecting to see it opened and the stranger ushered in, I was surprised to observe an elderly, but very fashionable-looking man step hastily across the lawn, and presenting himself without ceremony at the window where I was sitting, enter the apartment, and grasping my hand, with an emphasis suited to the words, exclaim,

"Matthew, my dear boy, how are you?"

I hesitated of course to make the suitable return to this salute, inasmuch as I really did not recognize the individual who thus assumed in his address the character of a most intimate friend.

"What!" cried he, interpreting the inquiring expression of my countenance, "you do not recollect me! But it is not surprising—it is twelve years since we have met; you were quite a boy when I left England, and perhaps I am altered—Your uncle, Richard Sydenham."

"My dear uncle! of course I remember you now; but I

never dreamed of seeing you here! How long have you been in England? Have you dined?"

To the latter question he answered in the affirmative, and to the former, that he had returned from the Continent only a week.

"I hope you are come to remain a few days with me?" inquired I anxiously.

"Not a few days, but a few weeks," returned my uncle, smiling; "I am surprised to find that my servant and baggage have not already arrived."

I declared myself delighted at this intelligence, but I fear with no very good grace; but of this my relative had too much delicacy to take notice. He began to talk of the late events which had occurred in our family—commended the improvements which had been made in the place—asked me whether any, and what changes the neighbourhood had undergone since he was last at Sydenham, &c. &c. When I had satisfied these inquiries, I desired, in return, a history of himself during his long absence abroad, but he postponed entering upon those details until the morrow, declaring that he was tired with his long ride. So saying, he rang the bell, and ordered his bed-chamber to be prepared, which being speedily done, he wished me good night and retired to rest.

The gentleman with whom the reader is thus made acquainted, was my father's younger and only brother. In conformity with that system which sacrifices all the junior members of a family to the aggrandizement of its head, Richard Sydenham had scarcely emerged from a neglected boyhood, when he was sent out into the world with a scanty allowance as a subaltern in a fashionable regiment. Thus situated, it is not surprising that he should have given way to extravagance and vice, which is the general tendency of young men. He soon became initiated in the worst parts of the knowledge of the world, and was, at an earlier age than usual, one of the most accomplished scoundrels in the service. He was handsome, insinuating, fashionable, daring, deceitful, dishonourable, heartless, selfish, and withal rather clever. By the time he had got his company, for the parliamentary interest of his family secured him promotion, Captain Sydenham, besides other achievements, had killed a man in a duel, seduced a married lady and sundry girls, and was overwhelmed with debt. Knowing that it was hopeless to look to his father for assistance, my uncle could extricate himself from his embarrassments only by his own talents and indus-

try. Accordingly he studied play, and shortly became a proficient in that science. Fortune smiled upon him in the hells, and his skill and luck soon entitled him to be recognized as a professional *leg*. In order to have the best facilities in his new line, which could only be afforded by a constant residence in town, he exchanged into the Guards, and thenceforth, I believe, came in for a share of the spoils of most of the young men who took that road to ruin. Infamous as he was as a libertine, a gambler, and even a ruffian, yet such was the fascination of his accomplishments, that he was not only tolerated but caressed in the best society;—thus affording an additional proof, if such were wanted, of the extreme importance of cultivating manners, which in the eyes of the world, possess the virtue of charity, inasmuch as they cover a multitude of sins. The reputation of a gamester, however, is as fragile as that of a woman; which, though it may bear a great deal of indiscretion, may at length crack. Colonel Sydenham, (for he attained that rank,) after having played many suspicious tricks with impunity, was, after all, detected. He had won a large sum from a youth of high rank, who murmured doubts, and hesitated to pay; strong language ensued, and a duel—in short it was said to be an ugly business, and a court-martial was spoken of. Under these circumstances Colonel Sydenham sent in his resignation to the Horse Guards, and withdrew to Paris—a scene more congenial to the advanced stage of the art to which he had attained.

When I came to town, I found the memory of my uncle still fresh and celebrated, although he had been expatriated ten or eleven years, and was considered dead to his country, insomuch that when my affair with Lady Oliphant was made known, I understood that it was a current saying at the Clubs, "He is a chip of the old block: they're a bad breed those Sydenhams; we all remember what his uncle Richard of the Coldstream was." With this precious relative I had not much personal acquaintance, for my father saw as little of him as possible, and had no communication with his set. What brought him to England, therefore, and to my house, I could not divine; unless indeed he wanted money, in which case I determined to supply his necessity, and to get rid of him as soon as possible, for his society was as little to my fancy as it was to my credit. Whatever was his object in coming over, I did not apprehend that he purposed making a protracted stay in this country, the air of which I presumed would not be found to agree with his constitution.

Great, therefore, was my surprise and chagrin, when almost the first words which my uncle uttered the next morning, communicated to me his intention of sitting down in England for the remainder of his days.

With much delicacy I hinted my surprise at this intimation, and my doubts whether he would find it convenient, or even practicable to abide by such a determination.

"Oh," cried he, carelessly, in reply to this remark, "if you mean Wellsbury's business, that has long blown over; he was a fool, and, enraged at the loss of his money, accused me very absurdly; but people have long since seen the matter in its true light, and been convinced that I was not to blame, though prejudice ran high against me at the time. At all events, it's a dead letter, and I don't stand a bit the worse with the world on that account now."

"But what are your circumstances and views, if I may take the liberty of inquiring?"

"Why, as to my circumstances, my dear Matthew, they are lame enough, and my views are to mend them; in which I hope to have your assistance—don't be alarmed—it is not your purse, but your information and interest that I want."

"In what respects?"

"I intend to marry," answered Colonel Sydenham; "and to cultivate the pleasures of domestic life."

"To marry!" cried I, with unfeigned admiration.

"Ay, to marry; what is there strange in that resolution?"

"The resolution is certainly an excellent resolution; I am only afraid you will find it rather difficult to effect it, at least under those advantageous circumstances, without which, I presume, you would not think it worth your while to enter into that state."

"Why not?"

"Oh, consider your time of life, my good Sir."

"What! you think because I am not a boy, no woman will look at me? How self-sufficient you young fellows are! But I don't want either youth or beauty; though, if I made them essential points, I shouldn't despair of getting them, rarely as they are connected with fortune, which is my principal object, and which I must have."

"But," said I, "there is, in my opinion, another difficulty still more formidable than your age. What woman do you suppose, young or old, would trust her fortune and happiness to such an extravagant dissolute veteran as you, my dear uncle?"

"That depends a good deal," answered my uncle, "upon the relatives, who are generally d—d nuisances in these matters: but there are very few women who would really, of their own accord, feel a repugnance against me, for the reason you name; there might be some shyness and scruples at first, but they could easily be done away with by a very little management and tact. And as to my age, you really overrate it; I am only nine-and-forty, and I don't think I look even so old: I am rather bald and grey, to be sure, but then you frequently see young men of five-and-twenty almost as much so."

"Well, I heartily wish you success," said I; "and I believe there is nothing like confidence and determination in promoting it. And upon whom is your first attempt to be made?"

"How can I tell you, when I have not been a week in the country, and have as yet had no opportunity of making inquiries. It is in this particular that I have in the first place to apply to you for information. You have been in the midst of everything for these two years past, and of course, know all the fortunes in the market. So give me a catalogue."

"But what is your price?"

"Fifty thousand, at the very least."

"Let me see; there's Miss Webster the tailor's daughter, 150,000*l.* 3 per cents.; Miss Lazarus, 100,000*l.*; Miss Grooby, fee-simple, 10,000*l.* a year, out of guardianship; Miss Mallison, 6,000*l.* a year, remainder intail, present tenant old and sickly; Miss Webb, 4,000*l.* a year, copyhold; Miss Hodgson, West Indian property, averages 5,000*l.* but uncertain; Miss Babbage, 4,000*l.* a year, capital 60,000*l.* invested in houses; Miss Richardson, co-heiress, 70,000*l.*, ward of Chancery; Duchess of Cirencester, jointure 7,000*l.*; Mrs. Playfair, jointure, two shares in a railway, supposed 4,000*l.* a year, but uncertain. There are several other widows whom I could name with less jointures. You have them at all ages, those whom I have named run from seventeen to seventy."

"Well," said my uncle, "but are there none nearer home? is there not a Miss Jephson or Jackson, in this neighbourhood?"

"You mean, I suppose, the *ci-devant* wagoner's daughter, Jackson, who bought Sir William Merrivale's place?"

"I dare say; she is an heiress, is she not?"

"Yes, but entirely dependant upon her father, who is a hale man, and will last twenty years longer at least," I re-

plied, for I preferred setting my uncle upon a distant scent; "I should not recommend you to try that quarter."

"Perhaps you have marked her for yourself, Matthew?" rejoined Colonel Sydenham; "if you have, say so, because I would not, on any account, poach upon your manor."

"I have no thought of her, I assure you."

"You really have none?"

"None, upon my honour."

"What is her age?"

"About four or five-and-twenty, I should think."

"Handsome or plain?"

"Neither the one thing nor the other, rather good-looking, perhaps."

"Clever?"

"I cannot tell you, for I have seen her only once, and then scarcely exchanged a word with her."

"Are her manners pretty good?"

"I should hardly say they are vulgar, but she has not an air *du monde*."

"No, of course not; one doesn't expect that; did she appear to you to be free from affectation."

"Why, yes."

"Um! very well," said my uncle musingly; "this Miss Jackson is just the thing, I see; at all events I will try her during the recess, when I have nothing else to do. If I don't succeed before spring, I can but go to town, where, by having several strings to my bow, I should be secure of one at least. As to the city women, I fear there would be but a bad chance with them, for they are generally whipped up by those d—d Scotch and Irish peers, who allure them with their beggarly coronets."

"Then I suppose you intend favouring me with your company for some time?" said I.

"I hope you have no objection to my doing so?" said my uncle: "I shall be no restraint upon you, be assured. Continue your own habits and pursuits, I shall follow mine, and we shall be quite independent of each other."

I told him that he was quite welcome to remain in my house as long as he found it convenient; I then asked him for his promised account of his adventures during his residence abroad, to which he answered, that he had really little to tell; that he had been living an idle life, varied with few incidents worth relating. He gave me to understand that he had not prospered very well at Paris, as he had there so

many able competitors in his line. He evaded my inquiries as to his reasons for quitting France, and turned the conversation upon myself, whose celebrity, he said, had reached him across the Channel, chiefly, however, as it appeared, through Lord Oliphant, who had abused me to him pretty handsomely. He had heard of my contest with the Havilands and Jackson last year, and expressed his gratification at learning that no ill blood subsisted between me and those families.

"I believe," said I, "that the neighbourhood is pretty much *in statu quo*, except that the Sothebys are extinct, and Merrivale is gone to the devil."

"I wonder the latter did not happen sooner," answered my uncle; "I have won many hundreds from him with the greatest ease: I often told him that play was not his forte, and that he would be ruined if he went on. Well, I'm sorry for Merrivale, for he was a very good fellow; though, to be sure, one profits by the misfortunes of one's friends; for if Merrivale Court had never come to the hammer, Jackson could not have been there now; and if he were not there now, I should not stand the good chance which I believe I do of ultimately becoming master of the place myself. So that we may agree with the moralist, who says, 'Whatever is, is best.' Eh, Matthew?"

"Very true, indeed," answered I.

"And how do the Daventrys get on?" resumed my uncle; "I see that he has got his Marquisate at last; he has been trying for it many years, I believe. How many of his daughters has he got off?"

"There is but one now in the market—Lady Charlotte."

"Is Lady Elizabeth married, then?"

"No, but she has retired and left the field open to her sister."

"Why yes, she must be rather *passé* now, for she had been out some time before I left England. How came it that she hung upon hand, for I recollect her as having been a very brilliant girl?"

"Pride is the cause, I believe; she has had many good offers, all of which she refused, because they did not come up to her self-estimate. She accepted one, however, an immensely rich man, Sir Robert Hawkesworth, and the match was to have taken place, but the settlements demanded were so exorbitant that he declined, and consequently it was broken off. I have not heard of any refusal since."

"And what are become of the sons?"

"They are all five billeted upon the country in several departments; Haviland and his brother Richard of the Blues—now Lord Richard, are in for the county, as you are aware, I suppose?"

"I must make my round of visits, and you must accompany me; when shall we go?"

"To-morrow, if you like."

"To-morrow be it then; we will go to Betchingley first."

CHAPTER IX.

When Colonel Sydenham presented himself the next day carefully dressed, I could not but admire the handsome personal appearance which he exhibited, notwithstanding his time of life and dissipated habits. His figure was still perfectly upright and well proportioned, and though debauchery was manifest in the cadaverous complexion and weak sunken eyes, surrounded by innumerable small wrinkles, yet his face still retained vivid traces of that beauty for which it was once celebrated. His manners had lost none of their attraction, and his figure had much of that air denominated aristocratic, before which the vulgar cannot stand. I no longer regarded him as presumptuous in still aspiring to the favours of the fair, many of whom might prefer his mellow manhood to the graces of a more juvenile suitor. I was not very well reconciled to the prospect of his company for so long a time as he purposed remaining in my house, but I had no alternative, for I could hardly refuse my hospitality to so near a relative, after so long an absence from his native country. I knew, however, that he would abide by his promise of molesting me as little as possible, for he was too much a man of the world not to understand the convenience and even necessity of independence, between two persons relatively situated as we should be. In short, as there was no help for it, I wisely determined to make the best of the matter.

We rode to Betchingley, which was distant about eight miles from Sydenham. In our way we fell into a conversation upon marriage, and single life, which, though it may not contain the wisdom of Lord Bacon's Essay upon the same topic, or the morality of a sermon, may still, perhaps, amuse, as representing the opinions respecting that important subject, of a man destitute alike of principle, of delicacy, of passion, and propriety of feeling. This discourse arose from my uncle's asking me whether I had any thoughts of marrying,—a question which I of course answered in the negative.

"You do well not to be in a hurry," said my uncle; "marriage in your and similar cases, when the object is the per-

petuation or conveyance of titles and estates, is a necessary evil; but surely a man would postpone it as long as possible."

"But," rejoined I, "if a man marries late, he will in all probability be cuckolded."

"I don't know," returned my uncle, "that age makes the difference of one per cent. in the chances. Every man who enters the marriage state, will, in all probability, be cuckolded some time or another during its continuance; and I really don't see that he need much care, provided he is sure of his heir; in other respects, he can be no sufferer, for the damages generally cover the expenses of the divorce."

"But have you no consideration for the dishonour—the wounded feelings—the violated affections?"

"My dear Mat., these are mere cant terms. What man, with the least knowledge of the world, ever considered himself shamed by the infidelity of his wife? It has occurred to me to see and know many men in this situation, and I do not recollect a single instance of one deeply or permanently affected by it. Annoyance at the time, and wounded vanity, I have sometimes observed, but these impressions were very transitory. In fact, women, considered as objects of attachment, are pretty much alike; and a marrying man, if he has been deceived in one, may go into the market and select another from hundreds possessing the same qualities which recommended his former mistress."

"Ah," said I, "you rakes regard women so much as a mere animal; there is no refinement, no soul in your passion; all is gross sensuality."

"I beg your pardon," replied Colonel Sydenham; "I think the sentiment an essential part of an amour, which would be flat and uninteresting without it."

"I see that you cannot enter into my idea; what you call the sentimental, I do not distinguish from the gross part of love. What I should look for in a woman, would be virtuous and pure, yet constant and devoted affection."

"You might look for such a thing," rejoined my uncle, "but I hardly think you would succeed in getting it: a female, with the combination which you require, is a rare bird; for my own part, I don't believe she exists. As to the virtue, you may find it, but accompanied with frigidity, of which I am inclined to suspect it is the child. The purity has always appeared to me a contradiction in terms, and fit only for poets

and novelists to talk about; and the constancy and devotedness are possible, but depend upon circumstances."

"Upon what circumstances?"

"Why, upon opportunity; the want of which gives rise to the silly cant and nonsense of virtue, purity, and constancy. Is not this proved by the fact, that professional libertines scarcely ever meet with an utter defeat (although frequently repulsed) in their systematic attacks upon women! The severe policy which excommunicates a woman for a single *faux pas*, whatever may be the circumstances under which it was committed, seems to me a tacit acknowledgment of the vicious propensities of the sex: yet in many cases we see that the certainty of this terrible punishment does not restrain them, and many a woman is called virtuous, who, coolly weighing the advantages of yielding to her criminal will against the loss of reputation, caste, fashion, and influence incurred thereby, decides in favour of the latter."

"All this may be very true," answered I, "but I am unwilling to be convinced that amiable women exist only in fiction."

"I have no wish to argue you into any such belief," said my uncle; "it would be especially ungrateful in me to become a wholesale slanderer of a sex from whom I have received so many favours;" (and he smiled;) "I have perhaps drawn erroneous conclusions from the peculiar experience which I may have had, and I dare say your own more general and ordinary experience enables you to contradict them."

This challenge I could not accept, so remained silent, and the conversation dropped. My uncle proposed, with an air of complacency, that we should put our horses into a trot, to which I acceded, and which soon brought us to Betchingley.

CHAPTER X.

At Betchingley we left our cards, the answer to our inquiries being 'not at home.' Thence we proceeded to Elmwood, which graceful name its new possessor, Mr. Jackson, had been pleased to give the beautiful place which had been known in the county, time out of mind, as Merrivale Court.

At Elmwood we were admitted. We found Miss Jackson alone in the drawing-room, and on entering it (for the first time, since its new ownership,) I was immediately struck by the similarity which it presented in its furniture and style to that of Betchingley. The fair mistress herself wore a straw bonnet and a plain dress like the Ladies Haviland, except that Miss Jackson's bonnet and gown appeared to be of still coarser materials than their's; doubtless by way of improvement on her models at Betchingley.

Although I had had the pleasure of seeing her only once before, she received me as an old acquaintance, and with a charming frankness presented me with her hand. I introduced my uncle, who thereupon made one of his most elegant bows; and in his time, I have heard my father say, that he was considered the best bower in town. Miss Jackson indeed seemed to feel it, for she curtsied in return with a degree of *empressement*, and almost forgot to desire the servant to see if Mr. Jackson were at home, and to tell him that we were there.

One, and indeed I may without vanity say, almost the only accomplishment of a man of the world in which I was deficient, was a facility in that species of conversation peculiar to the society of the other sex, and which is known by the name of small talk. Upon any subject at all tangible, I was allowed to be a very successful talker; but though I confess I studied hard at one time to acquire it, I never could arrive at that somewhat divine faculty which most practised men of the town possess, namely, of creating a conversation out of nothing, and sustaining it upon nothing. Frequently have I stood by, thrown into the shade by a voluble coxcomb, for whom of course I felt a thorough contempt, as well as for the quality by which he recommended himself to the sex,

although I believe I would have bartered for it one of my own sterling talents. Whenever I attempted this kind of meaningless gabble—for I know not by what other appropriate phrase to designate it—I insensibly found myself gliding into sarcasms and sneers, which, though listened too with respect, did not procure for me the desired epithets of "delightful, most agreeable," with which my despicable but more fortunate rival was gratified. I believe, however, that my satirical disposition and deficiency in woman's talk, were favourable to the high fashion which I maintained during my first season, inasmuch as they preserved fear, and kept off familiarity; and thus, though I was courted by all, I really believe I was liked by none. At Claverton House, indeed, I had found my element, but I had found also there so many compeers that I could shine only among many stars of equal and some of much greater magnitude.

My uncle possessed the accomplishment I speak of in perfection. While I was preparing to while away a few minutes of an uninteresting visit by a discussion upon the weather, Colonel Sydenham stepped forward, and ousting me with graceful ease from my assumed position of leader, immediately touched with admirable tact the conversational sympathies of Miss Jackson, and was immediately launched into the full stream of small talk before I could trace the process by which he had arrived in that happy channel.

It was soon evident to me that the heiress of Elmwood was charmed by my fascinating relative, and I could judge moreover from the manner with which she received his attentions, that it was not with her an every-day occurrence to meet with so fine a gentleman, far less to find him laying himself out to be agreeable to her. Miss Jackson was vulgar; she could not, indeed, be otherwise; for, unfortunately, before her father became a gentleman, and set up pretensions to a higher class of society than that to which he had hitherto belonged, his daughter had passed that age when the character and manners are formed, and consequently education and society having irretrievably confirmed Nature, she could only lacker it over by an imitation of the externals of her superiors. The ladies of Betchingley, (although they noticed her, I believe, only *in the country*,) were necessarily her chief models; for though her father had taken her with him to London, and placed her at the head of an establishment befitting his wealth and station as an M. P., and engaged a decayed gentlewoman of some quality as her chaperon, yet she did not succeed—as I was informed by those who had opportunities of knowing,

which I personally had not, for I seldom stirred beyond my political set. Yet now "town," and "*fashion*," and "the Daventry's," were as ready in her mouth as household words. She thrice went out of her way in order to intimate to us *indirectly*, firstly, that she had a box at the opera; secondly, that she had been at a countess's party; and thirdly, that she was acquainted with a duke. Intercourse with the great and the fashionable was, of course, to Miss Jackson the supreme good, as it is, I am sorry to say, to many of Miss Jackson's betters.

After we had been sitting some time, Mr. Jackson made his appearance. I could not help remarking how completely he was attired *à la* country gentleman. In his anxiety to identify himself with that character, he even over-dressed and overacted it. He wore an exceedingly shabby and ill-made blue coat, yellow leather breeches, long top-boots with clumsy spurs buckled on them, and in his hand he carried a large riding-whip and a low-crowned broad-brimmed hat.

Mr. Jackson shook my proffered hand with much cordiality, expressing his satisfaction at my amicable dispositions, and his hope that all angry feelings connected with our contest last year were as entirely forgotten on my part as on his, and that we should henceforth be good neighbours, however we might differ in public life. To this obliging language I answered in corresponding terms, rallying my late opponent at the same time on the *elasticity* of his principles, which, to judge from his being returned as the nominee of the Haviland family, had undergone a considerable modification since last year. This playful sarcasm the worthy gentleman took with perfect good humour, and chuckled heartily at what he pleasantly called his apostasy.

"Ha! ha! they call me turncoat, tory, aristocrat, and the Lord knows what here, I believe; but you and I know that there must be one language for the hustings, and another for the House—don't we, Sir Matthew? ha! ha!"—and he gave me a nod and a wink of freemasonry, to which I, however, returned only a dissenting smile.

"Oh, you forget, Mr. Jackson," said my uncle, "that Matthew is a leader of Opposition, and of course a patriot for the time being, and cannot, for decency's sake, sanction the delusion which you politicians practise on the poor people."

"Very true, Colonel, very true; but in the main we're all the same, Whig and Tory, all corrupt, all looking to our own ends. However, I'll candidly own that I'm not one of those who would seriously join the declaimers against the present

system; I think it extremely doubtful whether the country would be better off under any other, so that I'm for letting well alone."

"Ah," said Colonel Sydenham, with a dissenting smile, "I am with the declaimers whom you treat with such contempt; depend upon it, the interests of the people never will and never can be consulted while you landed aristocracy have the upper hand."

"Well, well, well," cried Mr. Jackson, who seemed not displeased with this observation, "we may have our prejudices—I don't deny it—I don't deny it, Colonel."

"Now, pray don't begin talking your politics, gentlemen, if you please," said Miss Jackson; "I hear of nothing else from morning till night. I want you to frank me these letters immediately, Sir, to be in time for the post."

"I believe," said the old gentleman, as with affected annoyance he took the pen and the covers from his daughter's hand, "I do believe that you ladies think Members of Parliament are made for nothing else but to frank your letters."

"Why, I really don't think you are good for anything else," retorted Miss Jackson, "as far as your Parliamentary characters are concerned. In general, I think you very agreeable, except when you talk politics, which I think is as ill bred as it would be to talk Greek or Latin before ladies: Don't you agree with me, Colonel Sydenham?" Colonel Sydenham smilingly assented, and the lady proceeded. "Really, papa, it's a habit which I must break you of; why don't you take a lesson from Lord Daventry—dear, delightful, gay old man!—who would rather be dumb than utter a word of politics in the presence of a lady."

"Well, Sophy," replied papa, "I'll endeavour to mend; but you must recollect I'm not one of your fine flowery courtiers or gay men of the town, but a plain-spoken country gentleman, who has a right to prose."

"Yes, I grant you, in the House of Commons, but not out of it," answered Sophy.

"Are you acquainted with Mr. Probate?" inquired I.

"Probate? yes, to be sure I am," said Jackson; "an excellent fellow; he's my particular friend."

"Oh, that horrid bore!" exclaimed the daughter; "why he's absolutely proverbial! I see now—Sir Matthew has furnished the key; you have been bitten by Mr. Probate; Oh pray cut that horrid old man; I ask it as a particular favour."

"Cut Mr. Probate! cut John Probate?" cried the father;

"my dear, you must not let your tongue run on so; I wouldn't for the world that any of my family was known to ridicule or speak slightly of Mr. Probate, a county member, and a man nearly connected with Government, and of great weight in the country."

"La, papa, what harm to say that he's a bore? why every body says so."

"That may be, Sophy, my girl, but *you* should not say so; consider how *I* am situated." And Mr. Jackson looked very significantly at his daughter, who took the hint, and said no more on the subject.

"How extremely beautiful this place has become since I saw it last," said my uncle, walking to the window.

"Why, yes, Sir, I've laid out a great deal of money upon it," answered Mr. Jackson.

"But I don't recollect that picturesque ruin on the hill yonder, when I was in this part of the country before," proceeded Colonel Sydenham.

"I'm glad you admire that," said Miss Jackson, "for that is my idea; it is an *artificial* ruin."

"Indeed! upon my honour, a happy thought! how much it adds to the effect of the landscape!"

"It looks quite natural," said Mr. Jackson; "and so it ought, for it cost me a deal of money; but ladies will have their whims, you know, and it's a pretty thing, certainly."

"Oh, it is exquisite!" cried my uncle. "Matthew, what say you to something of the kind at Sydenham?"

"I should very likely be tempted to a plagiarism of Miss Jackson's idea," replied I, "but I fear the country about my house is too flat to admit of such an improvement."

A proposal to walk round the grounds was then made;—Miss Jackson and my uncle being behind, while I walked forward with the father. We were pressed to stay to dinner, but we persisted in declining, although Mr. Jackson hinted that his ordinary domestic arrangements were such as to preclude any embarrassment from the unexpected intrusion of strangers. My uncle, indeed, seemed rather disposed to accept the invitation, but I could not make up my mind to such an infliction. As we rode home, my uncle expressed his satisfaction at the favourable impression which he was conscious of having made upon the young lady, and his intention of proceeding vigorously in the business. We amused ourselves, however, with taking the good people of Elmwood to pieces, and especially enjoyed a hearty laugh at the artificial ruin.

CHAPTER XI.

My uncle, although he did not choose to acknowledge them, was evidently not without doubts with respect to his reception in the country, which were not removed until Lord Daventry had returned his visit. Being recognized at Betchingley, he did not hesitate to leave his cards all round the neighbourhood, and he generally received a very flattering welcome. The ugly affair, indeed, which had induced him to withdraw from England, was now of old date, and time is a softener of crimes as well of misfortunes; besides, although strong suspicions attached to him, there appeared to be no positive proof of dishonourable conduct; so that they who could not think him a calumniated, were willing to suppose him a reformed man; while others felt obliged to receive him, because he was sanctioned by me, and all allowed that he was extremely agreeable and well-bred, which was greatly in his favour.

The first joint invitation which we received was from the Jacksons, which I accepted, to oblige my uncle, who was bent upon the acquisition of the heiress of Elmwood. Nor was he daunted when I informed him that he had a formidable rival; for it was reported, and very naturally believed, that the young lady had been marked at Betchingley for Lord Richard Haviland, who, if he had not possessed what to her was of course the surpassing attraction, namely, rank, had the advantage of youth. In other respects, they were pretty much on a par, for they were both *roués*, and men of fashion. My uncle asked me some questions concerning Lord Richard, and expressed satisfaction when he heard that his rival behaved cavalierly toward Miss Jackson, treating her as a *dernier resort* at his service, if ever he should find it convenient to honour her with his name. Accordingly, when we dined at Elmwood, and in every other stage of his suit, Colonel Sydenham's attentions to Miss Jackson were chivalrously respectful, while they partook largely of that softness, delicacy, and grace, which insinuate themselves into the very core of the female heart. There was rare policy, be it ob-

served, in adopting a manner which so strikingly contrasted with the *nonchalance* of Lord Richard, who, if he had been moderately polite, would have engaged powerfully in his favour, vanity—that is, the love of rank and splendour, which must have been strongly influential in a person of Miss Jackson's character and education; but then, in the inner nature of women, (if I may so speak,) there is a deep-seated vanity, a feeling analagous to that which in our sex is called pride, and which immediately concerns the person of the individual: this Lord Richard had offended, and my uncle had fostered, and it asserted its supremacy by completely gaining the ascendency over the inferior passion. By vigorously following this line, therefore, in his addresses to her, Colonel Sydenham made rapid advances in the regards of Miss Jackson, while the young nobleman sank almost into her contempt.

Lord Daventry's visit to my uncle was soon followed by an invitation to dinner; and when he went, the Marquess greeted him with a profusion of civil things. The reader is already slightly acquainted with this personage, and his character has no materials to enlarge upon. He was merely a courtier—a very urbane, polite, insincere old gentleman.

We found the house quite full of fashionables, politicians, and wits, with most of whom I was acquainted more or less. With the first-named class I was wholly disgusted; the second had no longer any attractions for me: of the last order I had a less intimate knowledge than I possessed of the other two; but the little I had seen of it, did not prepossess me in its favour. I had a deep veneration for intellectual superiority, which disposed me to treat persons of distinguished talents with a sincerity and deference, remarkably different from the cavalier and sneering manner which I wore to the world in general; but indeed all the literary characters which I had met with in town, seemed to me to be animated with such a little tuft-hunting, jealous, affected spirit, that I found the respectful feeling, with which I was prepared to regard them, entirely misplaced.

Soon after I entered the room, one of these degraded men of genius, to whom I was slightly known, disengaged himself from a stupid lord, with whom he had been holding the semblance of an animated and familiar conversation, and addressed me with much cordiality. Mr. Gaitskell was indeed a person of very remarkable genius, and was admired and respected by every body who knew him only through his

works. He was, I believe, of very humble origin, and had passed the earlier years of his life in indigence and obscurity. But when his merits became notorious, his ambition manifested itself—not in endeavours to reach a station among the immortal names which, though unknown at the Heralds' College, are renowned through the civilized world—not to enjoy the society of the great, and the good, and the wise of his contemporaries, among whom he would have been honourably welcomed—but in an anxious desire and earnest endeavour to be admitted to familiarity with the titled and the fashionable! To accomplish this object, he condescended to the meanness of the lowest parasite, affected the man of the world, and having purchased a mud hut in some remote county, wrote himself in the Court Guides, Robert Gaitskell, Esquire, of Charcombe, B——shire. It is, perhaps, needless to add, that all this meanness and folly was thrown away; his infatuation was discovered and despised by the most superficial; and he was treated with levity by those who, compared to him in the qualities which alone are recognized by posterity, were not worthy to touch the hem of his garment.

"Sydenham," cried this personage, with that premature and obtrusive familiarity, (for as I said before, I hardly knew him,) to which underbred people are so prone; "I'm delighted to see you; had I known that you were at home, I should certainly have called; I promised to give the Daventry's a week, which, indeed, is already expired, but I find it so pleasant, that I'm thinking of getting rid of some of my other engagements and staying here."

He then ran into a gabble upon the frivolous topics of the day; expressed great concern on account of Lady Daventry's spaniel, which was very ill, and which he very much feared would not recover, although he and Lord Richard had been in consultation to prescribe for it. He told me a sad story about a fête in the country, for which splendid preparations had been made, being obliged to be put off in consequence of the sudden death of the father of the lady, who was his particular friend; but whether the sorrow with which he desired me to sympathize was for the lost father or fête, did not very clearly appear. He next introduced a more home subject, namely, myself and my adventures, and with smiling reprobation alluded to Lady Oliphant's business, and called me a sad rake; which he supposed, doubtless, the most gratifying compliment he could pay me, and one which would certainly have the effect of ingratiating him with me. I was not re-

lieved from him until the dinner-bell rang, when he darted off to present his arm to some lady.

The dinner passed off heavily, Mr. Gaitskell keeping a curb upon his wit, lest he should be considered as the professional talker, of which he had a horror; his conversation therefore was addressed exclusively to his neighbour, a pretty woman, with whom he endeavoured to sustain a flirtation, but succeeded with no good grace; for there is much tact required in flirting well, and an underbred man cannot possibly succeed. Colonel Sydenham was decidedly the star, although there were some famous beaux present; but no man could eclipse him in high breeding, and few could compete with him in conversational talents. So admirable was my uncle's management, knowing how he was situated, that Lady Daventry, who was a good woman, and had received him with marked coldness, made a point of observing to me after dinner, what an acquisition Colonel Sydenham was to their circle; and expressing her hope that he intended making some stay in the country, and that they should see a good deal of him. The Jacksons were not of the party. By desire of my uncle I sounded Lord Richard Haviland on the subject of Miss Jackson, and he spoke of her in no very flattering terms. These I reported to my uncle, who did not derive the satisfaction from them which might have been expected; and upon my making the remark, he said, that so far from considering Lord Richard's disrespectful mention of the girl a proof that he had no thoughts of her, he regarded it rather as an evidence to the contrary, for it was a common practice of men when they contemplated matrimony to abuse the lady, especially if their choice was, in any respect, not one to be boasted of. However, he entertained a well-grounded confidence that he should be the successful candidate for Elmwood, and the reception which he had found at Betchingley, satisfied him that if he were ever established, he might cast his old bad character, and begin the world afresh with one entirely new.

CHAPTER XII.

The reader having seen me engaged in the greater politics, is now to behold me involved in the lesser politics which regard a country town; though it must not be supposed that I entered into these latter of my own accord, but was almost unavoidably dragged into them by my situation.

A small town is proverbially the hot-bed of scandal and of all sorts of bad little passions, and the one in which I was interested was, perhaps, a remarkable illustration of the remark, for, independently of the jealousies, bickerings, and malignancies, of which it knew no respite, it was now agitated by a strife of that species which all politicians are agreed in denominating the worst—namely, the religious strife.

The rector of Betchingley, and likewise of the parish in which my property was situated, was a brother of Lord Daventry's, the Honourable and Reverend Doctor Haviland. He was extremely unpopular in both cures, being regarded as an aristocratical divine, who had entered the sacred profession solely for the sake of its loaves and fishes. It was argued that his arrogant demeanour, his reluctance to come in contact with his humbler fellow-creatures, and consequently the delegation for the most part of his important duties to a hired curate, and the uncompromising pursuit of his own amusements, were unbecoming the character of a Christian minister. Accordingly many of the Doctor's flock seceded from him and betook themselves to the guidance of the Reverend Joseph Lanky, a shepherd of the Dissenting persuasion, who had established himself in my parish, and was ever vigilant to entice and catch any stray sheep, which was hailed with peculiar welcome if they came from the fold of his dignified rival.

Now Doctor Haviland viewed this Lanky with rage and scorn, which feelings he usually expressed every Sunday in his place in church in the shape of severe allusions, sarcasms, and at length downright invectives, to all which the Methodist preacher retorted in the same strain, designating the minister of the Established Church a "high priest;"

and in proportion as his antagonist grew more acrimonious, "a persecutor and railer," and ultimately "a hireling who was not the shepherd, and cared not for the sheep." This sacred strife was accompanied by vehement party spirit. The scoffers stood by, regarding it as rare fun, and the moderates, who were really interested in the prosperity of religion, were apprehensive lest it might not be advanced by the contest. But the reverend Doctor was not content with denunciations from the pulpit; he intimated privately that any of his parishioners who absented themselves from attendance on the public service of the church would be marked and visited by his most severe displeasure. Nor was this an idle threat, for he actually succeeded in ruining two families, who, in obstinate defiance of his warning, persisted in attaching themselves to the dissenting congregation. But these vigorous measures were not attended with the beneficial effects contemplated; for the Beast is sometimes so stubborn and wrongheaded that it will be neither scourged nor coaxed into docility; and so it was on the present occasion. Dr. Haviland, however, had a strength and decision of character which were not to be daunted by defeat, and he persevered in the system of rigour until the two villages were almost in a state of insurrection.

One day, when they were at the highest point of excitement, the wife of the man, Rock, who, the reader will recollect, belonged to the dissenting persuasion, and who was, moreover, a great ally of Mr. Lanky, came to me in great perturbation to entreat that I would interpose to protect her husband from the vengeance of Dr. Haviland, who, in pursuance of an intention which he had frequently expressed, and indeed already partly carried into execution, of ruining this poor man because he preferred the chapel to the church, had caused his goods to be distrained because he was not immediately prepared to pay his rent, which had never before been peremptorily demanded at the exact day that it was due.

"Do, pray, speak for him!" implored the wife; "I hope you'll pardon my boldness and presumption, Sir Matthew, for you've always been a kind master to my poor husband; and if it was known that your honour took up his cause, the Doctor wouldn't for shame persecute him so; he'll be the ruin of me and my poor children else."

"But, my good woman," said I, "my interference would be considered impertinent, and would do no good, I assure

you: none but the law has a right to interpose between a landlord and his tenant."

To this argument Mrs. Rock could make no reply, and was retiring reluctantly and tearfully, when my uncle whispered to me, "Don't send her away; she's a devilish pretty woman, and if you don't care to take the opportunity of obliging her, pray give it to me."

"You are welcome to it," I answered.

"My good woman," said Colonel Sydenham, in a voice of condolence and consideration, "you must be aware of the difficulty and delicacy of complying with your request; however, I'm sure I may answer for Sir Matthew as well as myself, that if it is possible we will save your goods."

"God bless you, Sir!" cried the grateful Mrs. Rock, "God in Heaven bless you! if we *was* allowed but a week, or even a few days, we should be able to pay the money; he'll never stop till he brings ruination upon us, if some great and good friend like your honours don't take our part."

"But why do you lay the blame on Dr. Haviland, when neither he nor even Lord Daventry, in all probability, knows anything about it. It is his agent whom you must endeavour to propitiate."

"Oh, no, Sir, the Doctor is at the bottom of it; neither my Lord, though he was never a kind landlord, nor Mr. Purvis, would, of their own accord, be so hard upon a poor tenant. Dr. Haviland is our enemy, we know that too well, because we worships God according to our conscience."

"Well," said my uncle, "I've nothing to do with that; but assure yourself that I shall use my best endeavour to secure you in the enjoyment of your religious opinions, without molestation or injury to your temporal interests."

"I thank your honour humbly and heartily, Sir: you are a true Christian."

My uncle could not suppress a smile at this compliment, and having repeated his assurances of protection, and the object of it her expressions of gratitude, she curtsied and withdrew.

CHAPTER XIII.

Strong as was my uncle's principle never to omit an opportunity of obliging a pretty married woman, he preferred every mode of doing so before he had recourse to his purse. Unlike Trevelyan, who was at least as much actuated by vanity, as the flesh, in his pursuit of women, and who was never impeded by a pecuniary consideration in the attainment of a female object, my uncle, who addicted himself to the sex partly from temperament, and partly, I think, from an abstract love of vice, and whose passion for play was nothing more than an adoption of the easiest means of obtaining money, was ever studious to combine economy with enjoyment, and therefore conducted his pleasures with such prudence, that though one of the most successful of gallants, he assured me that he had been, upon the whole, rather a gainer than a loser in pocket by his intrigues, and was only on one occasion brought into court, when a farmer recovered fifty pounds damages against him for the seduction of his paltry daughter. This business my uncle could never speak of with patience, and frequently cursed it as the silliest, indeed the only ill-judged thing he had ever been guilty of; and excusable only on account of his being young and raw at the time. When I proposed to him, therefore, as the shortest and easiest course which he could take to gratify Mrs. Rock, in whom he appeared to have conceived so much interest, the redemption of her goods which had been distrained, he declined the suggestion, observing, that he did not choose to risk the possibility of offending any of the Daventry family, nor to depart from his principle of never making an outlay in any speculation, until he saw what promises it afforded of success. His plan was to propitiate Dr. Haviland, but as he was too slightly acquainted with the Doctor, he begged that I would call upon him for that purpose. With this request I complied, not indeed to farther my uncle's designs upon the woman, which were pretty obvious, but in pursuance of an intention which I had myself formed of relieving these poor people from persecution, even at the hazard of a breach with

the Havilands, and being stigmatized by the reverend member of that orthodox family as a partisan of Mr. Lanky.

To the parsonage accordingly I proceeded forthwith. The Rector was at home, and received me with that suavity of smile and address for which, and his elegant style of preaching, he was famed, even beyond the precincts of his parish; for he had commenced his holy vocation as minister of a fashionable chapel in town, where ladies crowded to hear vice and frivolity denounced in harmonious language, and invariably came away enraptured with the beauty of his person and his sermon. So much, I have been told, was he the rage, that for a whole season, pews at the chapel were he performed, were as much begged and prayed for, and as difficult to be had, as boxes at the Opera, when some illustrious *figurante* deigns to cross the Channel for a few nights to drive the town distracted.

After a few preliminary civilities, I touched upon the object of my visit, indirectly of course, by alluding with regret to the late rapid growth of heresy in the parish.

"Yes, my dear Sir Matthew," said the Doctor, "it is a nuisance which must be abated, and though the principal agency in such a work necessarily devolves upon me, the co-operation of men like yourself is of the first importance, so that I trust you will not remain, as I fear you have hitherto been, a mere well-wisher. Indeed," he proceeded, "it is as much your interest as it can be mine to put down these people, for the Church cannot suffer without the other parts; and I need not remind you that these dissenters in religion are naturally and inseparably connected with the radicals in politics, who are all either Methodists or Atheists, and would instantly combine, if ever either (which God forbid!) should grow to a head."

"Most true," answered I; "and you may easily believe that I, who have been so intimately connected with the Whigs, can readily enter into the spirit of what you say."

"I know it," returned the Rector with a smile; "for there is no set of men who yield to your party in devotion to your order, although you endeavour to mask it under popular cant. I must confess, if it were possible or permissible to hate or despise anything, I should hate and despise your democratic aristocrats. You see," proceeded he smilingly, "I do justice to your understanding, Sydenham, when I speak in this way; because we are now talking of the matter *inter nos*, public character laid aside, like rational men."

"I thank you for doing so; you may indeed talk to me on this subject without restraint, for I have done with politics for ever, and have ceased to take any interest in them."

"Is there not a little pique expressed there? you are a disappointed politician; you have been jockeyed by the Whigs, and therefore independently of other considerations, would make an excellent Tory: it is impossible but a man of your talents and station must have ambition. Why don't you join the ministry?"

"They neither want me, nor think about me; they have plenty of men, and could not, if they would, offer me anything which it would be worth my while to accept. Besides I am not in Parliament, nor could I get a seat at present; but, even supposing these obstacles did not exist, how could I join the ministry, hot from active opposition? Conscience, my dear Doctor, conscience would not permit me."

If the reader suspects from this speech of mine, that I was not so indifferent as I professed to be to politics, he is not mistaken. As I conceal no secret of my heart from him, I acknowledge that I did not abandon the House of Commons in disgust. The prominent station which I had occupied there, especially of late, and the high expectations which had been there expressed concerning me, had raised in my mind a degree of interest, which I did not believe myself capable of feeling; and to own the entire truth, my chief reason for seceding from Parliament, was the conviction that the strength of the Ministry, both in the House and the country, rendered it almost hopeless that the *debris* of the Whig party, of which I was considered leader, could be made formidable, even could I rely on their unanimity and their allegiance to myself, both which I knew to be questionable. To be the leader of any party, however small in the House, provided it consisted of firm and able men, must have satisfied my ambition for the present; but I did not choose to hazard the probability of ridicule and defeat.

Dr. Haviland laughed at my last words as much as his ever watchful politeness would permit him.

"Pardon me," said he, "but I could not help smiling, at your first stating all other obstacles, and then throwing in conscience as a make-weight. Not that I would make light of conscience in anything, God forbid! but really there are so few situations in which a political conscience cannot be so easily satisfied without any moral compromise, that it is hardly worth while to name it. You may look high far for a pre-

cedent and authority for what you do; your idol Mr. Fox, after repeatedly pouring forth every denunciation of ruin, indignation, and contempt, against Lord North, ended by voting at his side. Your case is not a tenth part so strong; Lord Tewkesbury's government is founded on a union of parties; it is committed neither to nor against any measure. You may be abused at first, to be sure, but not long; and who cares for abuse now-a-days? your only place is to support the Tewkesbury Ministry, which will last for ever. It is the only road for your ambition, believe me: as for a seat, I'm pretty sure we could find you one without going far from home." This was said significantly.

So! thought I, I see how the land lies. The character of the Haviland family was well known as *procurers*, (the phrase is scarcely too strong,) for every Government, and I could clearly perceive that their object was twofold, to seduce me to the Minister, and by returning me for P——, to make me, as they had already made Jackson, (a person of much less importance,) one of their dependants. Those of my readers who have done me the honour to pay attention to my character, will easily judge what probability there was of my Lord Daventry's success in this two-edged stroke of policy. However, as it suited my present purpose to propitiate the Doctor, I returned such an ambiguous answer as would enable him to give an encouraging report to his principal, and then led the conversation back to parochial concerns, and Rock's business in particular.

When I mentioned the name of this humble individual whom he had condescended to distinguish by his especial vengeance, the countenance of the pastor suddenly darkened, but was almost immediately lighted up again by that peculiarly urbane expression which usually sat upon his features, and called by his family a "sweet smile;" excepting Admiral Haviland (the only honest man by the way, who ever bore the name,) who more bluntly, but in my opinion not less happily designated it, "his brother's d—d sweet smile."

"Oh, they are a bad set, those Rocks; you don't know them as well as, I'm sorry to say, I do; and I assure you there are not worse people in the parish, and that is saying a great deal, God knows. They are quite incorrigible, and if I could get rid of them, we should go on much better."

"In what respect are they so flagitious, may I ask?"

"In what respect?" echoed the Rector; "don't you know they are the greatest abettors and advocates of that vagabond

Lanky! and I firmly believe, have been the ringleaders in all the rebellion and ingratitude which I have met with."

"But would it not have been better to remonstrate with these people, before you adopted severe measures?"

"Remonstrate, my dear Sir! so I did remonstrate, over and over again; I told them that if they persisted in such conduct they would incur my heaviest displeasure, and not only mine, but that of a far superior Being, who had repeatedly inculcated obedience to their spiritual directors, and all to no purpose; they would go on, and have corrupted half the parish by their evil example, although I have done all that man could do to stop the contagion."

"You don't understand me, I think: I meant to observe —pardon me if I am impertinent—that there was possibly a doubt, whether it might not have been more politic to have taken a less high tone at first, and to have previously tried the effect of expostulation, persuasion, and even entreaty."

"My dear Sydenham! I'm surprised to hear *you* talk in such a manner; don't you see the absurdity of such a course? Do you suppose that the voice of authority would have been regarded after I had used entreaty and failed? It would have been a compromise of the sacred character, which I should have no right to make; the province of a pastor is to command, the duty of his flock is to obey."

This was spoken with an air of dignity which was meant to silence argument.

He then dilated upon his annoyances and vexations, and his unenviable situation, with a repetition of which complaints I need not trouble the reader. Suffice it to say, that having heard them for sometime with patience, and an appearance of strong sympathy, I ventured to take advantage of his complacence to speak in favour of the Rocks. At first he was surprised that I should feel an interest in such reprobates, and was disposed to take it ill that I should address him in their behalf; he even affected ignorance of the last severity which had been inflicted upon them; but after a pause, during which he recollected that it was perhaps inexpedient to disoblige me, he put on an air of magnanimity, declared that all was forgiven, promised to plead their cause with his brother, signifying at the same time that he considered me responsible for the future good behaviour of my protegés. Having thus succeeded in the object of my visit, I wished the Doctor good morning, and we parted highly satisfied with each other.

CHAPTER XIV.

Among the nuisances of which Dr. Haviland bitterly complained to me, was one of sufficient importance to demand a separate chapter in my book. As if the trespass of Lanky were not a sufficient affliction to the poor rector, he was lately tormented with the presence of a second poacher on his own ground, in the more unusual, and therefore more dangerous form of a female. This was a lady of the name of Chilton, who, it appeared, having lived in seclusion from the world, had by constant religious study and devotional contemplation, about the fiftieth year of her age, wrought herself up to the notion that the end of all things was at hand, and that she was delegated by the Most High to announce that fact to the world. Accordingly she put forth two thick volumes, in which she proved, by admirable reasoning from the Revelations and the signs of the times, that the battle of Armageddon was about to happen, and consequently exhorting mankind to abandon all earthly cares, and to look sharp and repent of their sins, for they had no time to lose. Her volumes, however, did not take; for a year after this great news was published, things went on as usual, and the infatuated public continued to eat, drink, and be merry, just as if no millennium was at hand. Whereupon, shocked, I suppose, at the obduracy of the world, Mrs. Chilton determined to try her hand in a more limited sphere, and to afford the natives of P—— the benefit of that start in the race for salvation, which the blindness of the many had neglected. Accordingly, the good lady took up her abode in the neighbourhood, and having hired a commodious cow-house in the town, she commenced operations, by giving notice that all persons who were desirous of hearing a true exposition of Holy Writ and the *great secret*, were to repair to the said cow-house on certain evenings in every week.

In every place where human beings are assembled together, there is always a fair proportion of hypocrites and well-intentioned, wrong-headed people; therefore Mrs. Chilton's cow-house was very soon crammed. Prompted by my pas-

soon by seeing everything I went there one evening, and really I was surprised to hear so old gentlewoman pour forth grammatical sentences with such fluency. But the lecture or sermon was an intermeddling stuff—a rumbling of absurd quotations of scripture promises, enthusiastic exhortations, incoherent denunciations, interspersed with texts, which she had always ready to turn up a sentence, or stop up a gap in her argument.

Indeed, if I had been a profligate, who is happy to find sport in anything, or a professed scoffer, who especially delights in finding it in sacred matters, I might have been highly entertained; but being neither of these, whatever the careless or prejudiced reader of my book may say or think to the contrary, I was pained to seeing religion made ridiculous, and perverted notions of it imparted to persons who meant well.

But her assumed sermons, as they were termed by the good lady's disciples, were not confined to preaching; she sought elsewise to establish her doctrines more firmly, by educating therein the rising generation within her influence. For this purpose, on the off-days, when there was no preaching, she converted her cow-house into a female school, judging shrewdly enough, that if the women were secured, there need be no fear of the other sex. Our ignorant and prejudiced forefathers thought that the community would best perform the duties of the station in which Providence had been pleased to place them, by receiving only a degree of education proportionate to their homely lot: but Mrs. Chilton, more generous and enlightened, was of opinion that it was a good and glorious thing to impart a high degree of mental cultivation to that humble class which gain their livelihood by the sweat of the brow. Accordingly, the walls of the cow-house were hung round with maps, and slates, and emblems of curious needlework, but scrubbing-brushes, brooms, and such like implements of homely industry, were banished far from this seminary for the education of refined chambermaids and elegant scullions. I once attended an examination of these damsels, upon which occasion Mrs. Chilton put them through their manœuvres. The business commenced with a psalm, which was howled out, by the whole school, in horrid harmony, by way of prologue to the performances. The several classes were then called up successively. The Bible-class led the van, and at the word of command, let fly volleys of texts. The geographical class

came next, and these displayed an acquaintance with the relations of countries, the leading events of their ancient and modern history, the names of their tyrants, heroes, and statesmen, which put my poor learning to the blush. The arithmetical class followed, and their proficiency in algebra might have confounded a Chancellor of the Exchequer. This department was composed of strapping wenches, who ran from fifteen to twenty. After they had concluded their lessons, I was to ask them a few miscellaneous questions, at which they were embarrassed, and at length one of the damsels informed me with a simper, "Oh, Sir, we only goes straight forrards." Whereupon, a sharp little girl, lower down in the class, instantly corrected her bad grammar, and according to the usage of schools, moved above her. To this the superior lady objected, on the ground that they were not performing a regular task; but the other pressed her claim, and some strong language passed in an under tone between them, when Mrs. Chilton interposing, decided in favour of the junior, who, with an exulting countenance, moved up to the place which the disgraced senior reluctantly and frowningly yielded. To this little incident, Mrs. Chilton, in a whisper pointed my attention, begging me to remark the noble spirit of emulation which was at work among her pupils.

An exhibition of the younger part of the school ensued, and these, whose tender years did not yet admit the higher branches of knowledge, were exercised in divinity, moral philosophy, poetry, &c. Some of this less practised class would occasionally be at fault, when Mrs. Chilton would bring them to their recollection by signals, remonstrances, and threats, which (pardon the comparison) forcibly reminded me of ragamuffins whom I have seen with dancing dogs.

After the performances were ended, I took the freedom of putting it to Mrs. Chilton, whether it was worth while to spend her precious time and that of her pupils in giving them those parts of education which relate to worldly affairs, seeing that the millennium was so near; which objection she answered with a text. I then entered into conversation with her upon her doctrines in general, and proposed doubts and questions touching several points; to all which she replied in general terms, but more frequently in passages from Scripture. In fact, it was evident that the good lady, like her pupils, could say her task only *her own way*, and that argument was an exercise to which she was unaccustomed, and usually *put her out*. Indeed she always professed the highest

contempt for human reasoning, and when I would cite any reverend divines or other learned authorities in opposition to her tenets, she would triumphantly answer, "They were but men!"

Some of the effects of the doctrines and the system of education enforced by this well-meaning lady may, perhaps, be seen hereafter.

CHAPTER XV.

A DAY or two after the conversation which I have detailed between myself and Dr. Haviland, I received a very graceful note from Lady Daventry, inviting me to come and stay a few days at Betchingley. This last step set my conjectures at work, for as that family were actuated by interested motives in everything which they did, both in public and private life, I knew that they must have some object in view by paying me such extraordinary attention, which indeed had latterly grown to a degree of *empressement*. This object I was not long in discovering. Lord Daventry's design of gaining me over to the support of his friend the minister, (for every minister was his friend,) and of inducing me to become his nominee in Parliament, has been already intimated—but what I mean is, that I began to suspect them of endeavouring to kill two birds with one stone, as the phrase is, and to cement my purposed political coalition with them by a connection of a still more intimate nature. I fear the reader will think me incorrigible—but Lady Daventry had daughters. She had two daughters, of whose characters I have nothing severe to say, for they were both women of Pope's description. The eldest, Lady Elizabeth, had been a splendid beauty, but, puffed up with flattery, she had, at her setting out, been so indiscreet as to declare that she would never marry under a certain standard. She had of course plenty of Sheridan's d—d good-natured friends to give the saying publicity. In consequence the beaux were piqued, and season after season passed, yet the peerless Lady Elizabeth Haviland received no offer which she could think of accepting. She was now past thirty, and had dignified her abandonment of the market by adopting a close cap, and taking to piety. Lady Charlotte, the second sister, had passed her *première jeunesse* before she was brought out; the Marchioness being one of those mothers whose principle it is never to bring the juniors *on* until the elder sister has been got *off*. She had now been out two seasons, yet no proposal had been made, which misfortune I am told she attributed entirely to her mother and sister, the

former as keeping her back so long, and the latter as the cause of her being kept back; for which reason she despised the former and hated the latter, but with a quiet hatred and contempt, for she knew that it would be bad policy to betray feelings which were neither popular nor becoming. In appearance she was a Madonna-like young lady, and was usually designated as "that sweet girl, Charlotte Haviland." Certain indications, which hardly admit of description, but are easily understood by a practised man, led me to suspect that an idea existed at Betchingley of attracting my attention to the fair Charlotte, who smiled bewitchingly whenever I approached, and listened with flattering interest whenever I addressed her. But, though pretty well convinced that I should not be an unsuccessful suitor, were I to try my fortune in that quarter, all the care of the young lady could not conceal from my penetrating eye, that though her hand might be readily yielded, it could not be accompanied by her heart, for that article, however minute an atom of her composition it might be, was already given to another. This other was her cousin, a pennyless young Guardsman who was staying in the house.—And here, as I am persuaded that my memoirs will be read with avidity by all mammas, I will take the liberty of warning them against an error into which I have seen the wisest of them fall, namely, that of relying too securely that education and training can so utterly eradicate all the natural affections from the breasts of theiroffspring, as to render it an impossibility that Nature should ever so far regain her authority, as to induce a daughter to resist or elude the parental dictates. Not that I mean to insinuate that Lady Charlotte Haviland would have hesitated to accept any gentleman her dear mamma pleased, for she was extremely well *brought up*; but there are young ladies of stronger passions and weaker reason who, in her situation, would have persisted in preferring the object of their affections to every attraction of rank and wealth which might unite in another suitor. For this reason, I would caution good mothers against allowing their children to be constantly in the way of accomplished and needy cousins, since that practice is so frequently productive of *mésalliances*, by which brilliant hopes and prospects are utterly destroyed. Now here at Betchingley you found an agreeable cousin, who was allowed to run loose about the house like a domestic animal. The Marchioness employed him to place her stool, to fetch and carry her work-table and books; the old lord would call "Ned, my boy," to

be his amanuensis when his secretary was out of the way; and the sons took his opinion upon their horses and dogs. If you had hinted to Lady Daventry to keep an eye upon the young Guardsman with her daughters, she would say, "What, Edward Cookson? absurd!" the Marquis would cry, "pooh!" and the young men would laugh in your face. Yet, notwithstanding, that circumstance alone would have deterred me, had I felt every disposition to marry the fair Charlotte; for I had no idea of becoming a lady's screen, which situation I have known some of my more obliging and less squeamish acquaintances to accept.

To Lady Daventry's invitation, therefore, I returned an answer in the affirmative, thinking that I might amuse myself there well enough for a few days. My uncle, who was included in the invitation, sent an excuse "having," as he phrased it, "other fish to fry." In fact he preferred going to Elmwood, where he had promised a visit for some time.

CHAPTER XVI.

No change of importance had taken place in the Betchingley party since my last visit. Mr. Gaitskell was still there, the happiest of men, for he was among the titled and the fashionable; better contented to be treated with contempt and ridicule by them, than to be the object of respect and admiration in society of inferior rank. The only person in the house from whom he did not experience insulting attentions, was Lady Margaret Haviland, a sister of Lord Daventry's. But this may be easily accounted for, since the good lady was not exempt from the neglect which usually attends the venerable virgins of a family, whom nobody ever dreams of noticing, except *en passant*, and Mr. Gaitskell was the only person who formed an exception to this practice. Not only did he frequently address his conversation to her, but laid himself out to please in a manner which I never saw used, unless by an interested person, or a gentleman of the Paulet—that is, of the highest—calibre. Mr. Gaitskell certainly did not belong to the latter class, and whether the former description may be applied to him, the reader, if he be not extraordinarily dull, may surmise, when I remind him that the object of our author's regards, though deficient in personal attractions, possessed a title and (it was said) thirty thousand pounds.

It will not perhaps be necessary to mention that I was considered an acquisition by all parties in the house, for though it was noted for being always filled with fine people, a person of my character is pretty sure of ranking high among the highest in town. Besides my first season, my intimacy with Beaumont, my having the entrée at Mrs. Majendie's, were not forgotten; and my seclusion from the *beau monde* the ensuing year, so far from diminishing my reputation, had added to it, inasmuch as my achievements in the political world had given me a new distinction, and proved that my abilities were as substantial as specious. Upon the whole I do not hesitate to say, that at this time I was regarded as one of the finest men in England. By the politicians I was as highly esteemed, for among them it was unanimously agreed that I stood foremost among the rising youth. And even the professional wits, as I did not write, looked upon me with a kindly eye, as an amateur and favourer of their craft. Surrounded, therefore, by flatterers, and an object of attention by

all, the head of a vain man would have been turned; but I had too much coolness and knowledge of the world not to perceive how much I was indebted to my accidental worldly advantages, for the praise and admiration which I received, and how small a share of personal merit would afford an apology for the extravagant eulogies of interested parasites. I knew, however, perfectly well the extent of my capabilities; and even had I been less capable of appreciating them, I should have been helped to the knowledge of them more by the vainly concealed hatred and envy of my aspiring contemporaries in the House of Commons, even than by the compliments of the older members. The former certainly sprang from a sincere and involuntary conviction of my superiority, while the other might have been suggested in some measure by motives less pure.

The morning after my arrival, strolling about in search of amusement, I entered the music-room, where several ladies were grouped around a harp, talking over the beaux in the house, as I suppose, for the conversation suddenly stopped, and there was a slight laugh when I made my appearance, which led me farther to suspect that my humble self was at the moment under discussion.

"Talk of a certain person, and he appears," said I; "confess that you were pulling me to pieces, and that I am come only just in time to save myself?"

"Confess that you are the vainest man in the world," answered Lady Elizabeth Haviland, who with her mob-cap and her piety, associated a certain talent for repartee, which entitled her to pass for a *belle esprit*. "I never knew one of those lofty gentlemen, who hold all the world in supreme contempt, who was not the most dependent upon its opinion."

"Well, if it gives you any pleasure," said Lady Charlotte, "I will admit that you were just then the subject of conversation, but what we were saying of you I leave it to your ingenuity to guess."

"How is that possible, when the subject is so fertile, and especially when treated by *les belles dames?*"

After a general exclamation at my vanity, Lady Elizabeth resumed.

"Well, you pets of the exclusives are privileged persons, and it is lost time and labour to war against your self-conceit. So as Charlotte has gratified you by acknowledging that you were the topic of our discourse, I feel bound to exonerate myself and every body else present, by saying that it was

she who interfered such a trifling time, and who was a very moment in the act of wondering what would become of you were absent."

"Oh, Lucy," cried Lady Charlotte, blushing and looking confused, as rather alluding to me.

"I am delighted to find that my fate is a matter of so much concern to Lady Charlotte: but I fear I cannot satisfy her curiosity, at least, unless she will take compassion upon me, and tell me what I am to be married."

This answer was followed by a fresh blush on the young lady's cheek and renewed confusion.

"That is strong language," said Lady Elizabeth: "it would be a proposal in Ireland, and downright matrimony in Scotland, but I hardly know what it is here: perhaps you can give us the interpretation, Lady Cawthorne?"

This was addressed to an old lady who was famous for match making, having married off three daughters and two nieces, neither of whom had attractions at all commensurate to the conquests which, under her generalship, they had achieved. Lady Cawthorne perceived the sarcasm, and as she did not want for malice, retorted still more spitefully,—

"I am afraid it amounts to no more than an empty compliment; but may be sure Sir Matthew knew the value of it before he gave it utterance."

"But it's a shame to analyse those pretty things, is it not, Sir Matthew?" exclaimed Lady Elizabeth; "as my brothers say, one should never look a gift horse in the mouth."

Lady Charlotte could have cried from spite and shame, and Lady Elizabeth could scarcely conceal her exultation at having succeeded in mortifying her younger and now more attractive sister; Lady Charlotte, however, always abstained from entering into a sparring match with her elder sister; first, because she had prudence enough to know that it had an unbecoming effect; and secondly, because she was pretty sure of coming off only second best in such skirmishes.

"But seriously," said Lady Charlotte, who wished to pass it off as a joke, and not to observe the sarcasms which she could not, if she dared return; "I should like to know what you intend doing next; for you have been a beau and politician, and are now supposed to have retired from public life."

"Alas for us poor maidens," answered her sister, "I'm afraid the *dernier resort*, matrimony, is still far distant; he has still many resources: he has not yet been either traveller or hermit, for instance."

"A hermit!" cried Lady Charlotte: "Good gracious! I can't conceive him turning hermit, at all events."

"I don't mean, my dear, a man who wears a long beard, and lives in a cave upon herbs and spring water; but an elegant hermit, living at home among his books, and enjoying philosophical conversation with a few select friends."

"Besides, you know Sir Matthew is a woman-hater," said a pert Miss; "and I'm sure would rather die of ennui than enter into the blessed state of matrimony."

"Pardon me," answered I; "I regard matrimony as most people do Heaven, a destiny the most desirable of all, but the enjoyment of which is sedulously postponed to the latest possible period."

"Oh, for shame!" cried Lady Elizabeth; "I hardly know which you are, more impious or ungallant."

"How hard it is," I rejoined, "that I should be abused and disliked because I am a plain-spoken man, whose only crime is being candid when he should be complimentary. But the hypocrite is the only popular character in this world, in which sincerity is considered rudeness, and truth impertinence. I have always thought that the falsest and silliest proverb I ever heard, which sets forth honesty as the best policy; for as sure as it is the best morality, so certainly is it the worst possible policy."

"Well," observed the aforesaid pert Miss, "of the two, I think I should prefer polite hypocrisy to bearish sincerity."

"I'm not surprised at that, my dear Georgiana," said Lady Elizabeth, laughing; "for you may have better hopes of hearing agreeable things from the former than from the latter."

"I declare, Lady Elizabeth," retorted the Miss, rather nettled, "I believe you intend to rival Sir Matthew himself in saying severe things."

"Not at all," answered the *belle esprit;* "but I see that I must beware of becoming an illustration of Sir Matthew's maxim, that truth-telling is the worst policy."

"What do you say to that doctrine, Mr. Gaitskell?" inquired one of the young ladies of that gentleman, who, at the moment, entered the room with a flippant movement, composed of a slide and a hop, which, I suppose, was meant to be fashionable and easy.

"Poets, you know," resumed Lady Elizabeth, "are professionally opposed to truth, therefore, Mr. Gaitskell must of course be an apostle of Sir Matthew's doctrine."

"Your Ladyship does me too much honour in designating

me an apostle of that art, of which I have occasionally been only an humble amateur," answered the Poet, colouring with vexation at the ungrateful allusion *to the shop*—"but without acceding entirely to Sir Matthew Sydenham's position, I think it must be quite evident that truth is too heavy a metal for circulation in society without a considerable alloy of falsehood."

"It certainly cannot be denied,"—said Lady Elizabeth—who, be it remembered, had given up the world—a phrase which is often used by those whom the world has given up, and which always reminds me of the discreet dog, who, when he saw preparations on foot for kicking him down stairs, contemptuously walked out of the house:—"It certainly cannot be denied, that they who live in the world must be continually acting and speaking contrary to their feelings and opinions."

"Surely they are the exceptions?" said I; "for the majority, I fancy, of the persons who compose what you call the world, are exempt from the pain of having feelings to be thwarted, or opinions to contradict."

"If the world is to be judged by Lady Elizabeth Haviland and Sir Matthew Sydenham," said Mr. Gaitskell, "I tremble for its doom, poor culprit!"

"Well," said Lady Elizabeth, "we have no wish to condemn it unheard, and as it can have no abler or more devoted advocate than Mr. Gaitskell, suppose he pleads in its defence?"

"It is hard," answered the poet, who, though dreading anything like being professionally entertaining, never avoided an opportunity of displaying his talents, when he could do so like a man of the world; "it is a difficult task to undertake before such ingenious, and, permit me to add, prejudiced judges."

"The balance is more than even the other side," returned Lady Elizabeth; "if you have prejudiced judges, you address a jury still more committed to the opposite way of thinking; so begin."

"What's going to be done?" inquired one of two or three gentlemen who just now straggled into the room.

"Oh, so delightful!" cried Lady Charlotte; "Mr. Gaitskell is going to make a speech in reply to Lizzy and Sir Matthew, who have been abusing us with impunity all the morning."

"Capital!" cried the beaux, as they dropped into seats to listen to the fun.

CHAPTER XVII.

"The world," said the Poet, "has always appeared to me a most ill-used and long-suffering being. It is represented as a monster of vice and folly. Not a crime or absurdity can be committed, but it must be abused and ridiculed as the author. Not a reprobate, genteel or vulgar, can take the road to ruin, but the world must be execrated as his seducer. It is belaboured weekly by the parsons, daily by the press in every shape, from the sermon to the play, and hourly by individuals of all sorts and sizes; nay, even many of its own members, who either live on its bounty, or share in its pleasures, will sneer at it to its very face. Does the world ever retaliate, or even murmur under this load of calumny? Does it ever protest against the hardship of being made responsible for the iniquities and absurdities of those who are predestinated fools and scoundrels? or of having the abuse of the advantages and pleasures which it offers, described as its real characteristics? Does it ever insinuate that all the slander with which it is overwhelmed, proceeds either from the malice and spleen of those who have been disappointed in their speculations upon its good nature and patronage, or from knaves and imbeciles, who are glad to father their villanies and weaknesses upon it? Does it ever complain of the gross injustice and bitter spirit of persecution with which all its foibles are searched out, dragged to light, and made the theme of every species of invective, reproach and scorn, while a thick veil is kept carefully drawn over its virtues? Does it ever vaunt of the admirable policy by which it preserves the honour of both sexes—making the slightest stain upon the reputation of the one an indelible blot, and the smallest breach of truth, honesty, or courage, irreparable in the other? Does it remind its detractors that it gives every facility to improvement, submits patiently to chastisement, whether it be the terrible scourge of genius, or the feeble stroke of a puny whipster, and yields a ready obedience to the deliberate voice of public opinion? In short, does it challenge its opponents to investigate human nature, and to pro-

duce a scheme of society which shall secure to mankind a greater average of virtue, wisdom, and happiness than it can afford?

"So much for the world; which, though I admit, like everything human, it is not exempt from faults, is, I must maintain, upon the whole of an amiable character, and utterly undeserving of the indiscriminate abuse which is lavished upon it from every side."

"Well," said Lady Elizabeth, "you have defended your friend and client with much ingenuity and skill; but I dare say Sir Matthew is prepared to refute your sophistry."

"I can willingly and confidently leave the task to you," returned I, moving toward the door, for I had no idea of showing off for the amusement of all the idlers who, attracted by the conversation in the music-room, (it being a wet day,) had crowded round us. It might be good enough work for Lady Elizabeth Haviland to bandy wit with Mr. Gaitskell, but it was scarcely worth my while to do so.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The few days for which I had engaged myself at Betchingley were now elapsed; but when I spoke of departure, Lady Daventry would not hear of my running away, for the ensuing was the race-week, which I must stay at least. With this pressing request I could not reasonably refuse to comply, and, indeed, I was well enough amused to feel content at remaining. On the first day of the races, when the Marchioness, after breakfast, was discussing and settling how their large party should be conveyed to the course, the arrangements were so contrived, that I found myself under the necessity of offering to drive Lady Charlotte thither, and accordingly, that young lady was billeted upon me—not indeed without a struggle; for a pretty little intriguing, married woman, who had for some days past been attempting to establish a flirtation with me, evidently had a design upon the vacant seat in my phæton, but she was out-manœuvred by the more experienced Marchioness.

A short time before the carriages were ready, I had retired into a little room adjoining a conservatory, to write a note. While I was thus employed, I heard two persons enter the conservatory, one of whom, a female, was speaking in a low but earnest tone. Although I could not distinguish what she said, I of course felt myself bound to remove beyond the reach of their conversation. But just as I was rising to act upon this honourable motive, I overheard my own name pronounced in the voice of Lady Charlotte Haviland. My curiosity was too much for my honour, and I will confess that I was riveted to my chair, in which disgraceful situation, I overheard the following dialogue.

"Dearest Edward, how can you torment yourself and me by such doubts? how can you suppose that I should think for a moment of that odious Sydenham? How often have I told you that I never can love any man but you, and I'm sure, of all men, I hate him the most—I do indeed, upon my honour."

"But," returned Mr. Cookson, for he was her companion, "if that is the case, I can't understand why you pay him more attention than any other man in the house; it is

observed, not only by me, but by several others; and I have even heard it said, that you were in love with the infernal fellow."

"In love! in love with Sydenham! And is it possible you could believe ——?

"Yes;" interrupted the youth, as if a thought suddenly struck him; "and no wonder, Charlotte; didn't you promise a month since, to go to the races with me? and now, the moment this man asks you to accompany him, you forget your engagement to me, and accept his offer; and I dare say, if he were to make a more serious offer to-morrow, you would give him the same answer."

This was the crisis; protestation, entreaty, and blandishment, had been used without effect; the alternative now was, tears or indignation. She adopted the latter; prudently recollecting, perhaps, that it would be inexpedient to dim the lustre of her eyes on that day, when she required all their brightness.

"I could bear a great deal from you, Edward, but this is unbearable; such language from one who has received from me such proofs of affection, is not only insolent, but ungenerous. But now, Sir, I have discovered how unworthily my affections are placed, and, however great the pang may be, I am determined to tear ——"

"For God's sake, my beloved girl, don't say so—my own love, listen to me, I have been too hasty—I did not mean ——"

"Oh!" cried Charlotte, with a voice faltering from the high tone of indignation, but still keeping on the *dry side*— "What a cruel, what an unmanly blow to reproach me with what I did, merely to blind mamma, and divert her suspicions from you."

"I know it—I believe it, generous, noble girl! Can you forgive me? on my knees I ask pardon, and promise never again to give way to my jealous fears, although they spring from the devotedness of my love."

Here, I suppose, the scene ended in an embrace, for listening attentively, and hearing no more, I stole toward the door, and saw the lovers leaving the conservatory, the gallant's arm round the lady's waist. Having written my note, I returned to the drawing-room, where I found, among the muster, the fair Charlotte, with her countenance wreathed in its most bewitching smiles, and the ladies admiring the beauty of her dress.

CHAPTER XIX.

I HANDED the fair Charlotte into my carriage, and we drove away a little in advance of the rest of the party. Taking my cue from the scene of which I had just been an ear-witness, I gradually dropped the style of badinage, in which I had hitherto flirted with this pretty fool, and glided into that gentle, subdued, confidential manner, which I take to be the last boundary where flirtation ceases, and business begins. Thereupon, I found the symptoms correspond exactly with those which my experience, corroborated by that of older practitioners, taught me, should be observable in such a situation, for they belong to instinct rather than education. Lady Charlotte, with the utmost facility, fell into the same strain —adverted to the insufficiency of races and all worldly pleasures to constitute happiness—delicately insinuated that she was herself unhappy; and though she did not speak of the "union of two hearts," "love in a desert," and such like, yet she contrived to leave me a pretty fair guess as to the cause of her uneasiness. Then took place the deeply interesting conjecture, "Can I be the blessed man?" Whereupon the gentleman was to be afforded every reason for answering this question in the affirmative, the lady taking care not to *commit* herself by any thing *decisive*, and accordingly, she rigidly confined her external demonstrations, to sighs, long silences, depressed spirits, and similar demonstrations, which certainly could not be said to amount to an *absolute avowal* of attachment to the object to whom they were addressed, and in whose society they were practised.

It was the most delightful drive I had ever taken; indeed, I had rarely been more amused by anything in the whole course of my life.

When we arrived on the course, I handed the triumphant Charlotte over to her mamma, who, with the other ladies, were already stationed on the stand. Some lively remarks were made upon our tardy appearance, but Lady Charlotte replied, with perfect unconsciousness, that I had driven slowly, and come by another road. The mother and daughter exchanged a single glance, charged, however, with meaning. Whether she found an opportunity of unburthening herself before they returned home, by communicating to her mamma the delightful news, that their endeavours had been crowned

with success, and that the Baronet had—*all but*—proposed, I cannot say: but if not, I think the Marchioness must, from the elated spirits of her daughter, have inferred that the word had actually passed.

Mingling with the crowd, I made my way to an unfrequented part of the course, where I might escape notice, and drawing out an opera-glass, set myself to observe what was going on at the grand stand. Presently I saw Cookson enter the gallery and station himself by the side of his fair cousin; he seemed sedulously anxious to atone for the ungenerous suspicions which he had expressed in the morning, and to assure her by his manner of his undiminished confidence and affection. After a short time he quitted the stand, and returned to the course: I advanced to meet him, and I remarked, with an inward smile, that his manner, which used to be cold, repulsive, and rather surly, when addressing me, had now become frank, and even cordial. We entered into conversation about the sport, and he highly extolled my colt which was entered for the cup, and expressed his hope and belief that he would win. Nothing could be more conciliating than this, and in talking over several matters, the beauties present were naturally discussed, and among these I assigned the proud preeminence to his fair cousin Charlotte, concerning whom I enlarged in terms of warm admiration. I soon worked the young gentleman up to the desired mood.

"She's a devilish nice girl, certainly," said he, with an affected air of indifference: "but if you admire her so much, Sydenham, why don't you marry her! I suppose there's very little reason to doubt, that if you were to offer, she would be too happy, eh!"

"So I should conceive," I replied, with perfect coolness. Cookson's countenance could with difficulty subdue an expression of rage and disgust at my assurance.

"What, then," pursued he with a laugh, "you have been trying the ground!"

I regarded him with an exquisite smile of self-complacency, and said, "My dear fellow, I never tell tales out of school; but give me your opinion; you have known her from a child, and have been as intimate with her as one of her own brothers; now supposing—observe, I only speak hypothetically—but supposing, of course, that my success was certain—that I had received from her every demonstration of affection short of absolute avowal of love—do you think Charlotte Haviland is the style of person to suit me—that she would make me completely happy? Now," I proceeded, laying my hand on

his shoulder, "tell me, like a good fellow, candidly, and without partiality, what you think."

This was spoken with the utmost coolness, while I saw from Cookson's face, which was no longer able entirely to master its emotions, that he was bursting with rage at my insolence and nonchalance, at the same time that my innuendoes had evidently re-awakened his jealous suspicions.

"Because," resumed I, for my companion was too much astonished to answer immediately, "because I rather fancy that our pretty little friend is given to coquetry and flirtation; what do you say?"

"I believe you are right," answered he in a hurried tone, which plainly denoted his agitation—"She certainly is an infernal flirt—d—n her!"

"Well, it's a satisfaction to have one's opinion corrob——"

"Exactly;—But tell me, Sydenham—did she ever make any decided advances towards you?—did she ever show any symptoms which you'd call unequivocal?"

"Oh," answered I, "that is a question to which, under any circumstances, there is but one answer—of course *not*."

"Nonsense," cried Cookson fretfully; "tell me—I only want to know for fun—what did she do or say?"

"Upon my honour I can't say anything more on the subject—it is out of the question."

"By G—, Sir, I must and will know whether——"

"Hu—sh! they'll overhear you: what the deuce are you getting into a passion about? I beg a thousand pardons if I've said anything to offend; perhaps I ought to have recollected that I was speaking to the young lady's cousin-german; but, though I certainly don't mean to dispute a man's exclusive right to damn his own relatives, I thought when you pronounced her in such strong language an arrant little flirt, I might venture to hint a concurrence."

"Oh, I was only joking," said Cookson, who had recollected himself; "but the fact is you've been carrying the game very far with the girl—confess, is it not so, my fine fellow?"

"Certainly not to her cousin-german," answered I. "But come, I'll gratify your curiosity so far; no soft confession has yet been made on her part, and no proposal on mine, which—the latter I mean—I can assure you never will. But there's the saddling bell, and I must go and see my colt start."

So saying I mounted my horse and galloped off with the throng to the other end of the field, leaving poor Cookson to the uninterrupted enjoyment of the pleasing reflections, which our conversation must have raised in his mind.

CHAPTER XX.

My horse lost, and Lady Charlotte absolutely wept for his defeat. What pity that those precious tears were thrown away upon one, who had not the soul of a sportsman! for what man, in whom that noble spirit reigned, would not have been vanquished by such a demonstration of sympathy and interest? I seemed, however, all gratitude and delight, and whispered in her ear that I would have sacrificed the Leger for one of those precious tears. At this strong compliment she raised her dewy eyes eloquently to mine, and sighed with such alarming significance, that I internally felicitated myself upon the protection of the thousands who were around us, for I saw from her manner, that if I had rashly used such an expression, when no other human being was present, nothing could have saved me from a scene. I determined therefore, in future, to be more circumspect in my compliments. Even as it was I felt some apprehension lest my indiscretion should be taken advantage of, when we were driving home together; on this account I kept my phaeton close with the other carriages of the Betchingley party when returning from the course, and our *tête-á-tête* being thereby continually interrupted, I reached home in safety.

I believe I have intimated that Lady Elizabeth was not unaware of the plot which was laid for me with respect to her sister, though I should think it unlikely that she was admitted to her mother's confidence on the subject, there being little congeniality between the Marchioness and her eldest daughter, whose behaviour to the former was marked by that civil indifference which approaches to contempt, while Lady Daventry was evidently cowed and kept at a distance by Lady Elizabeth's strength of character and superiority of understanding. I have also remarked, that, partly from the malicious amusement which some persons of talent find in baffling the little schemes of their inferiors, and partly from the satisfaction which disappointed ambition generally derives from the frustration of others, Lady Elizabeth had manifested

a disposition, in the first instance, to counteract the views of her mother and sister with regard to me. Frequently would she detach me from Lady Charlotte, and, by her engaging brilliancy and bitterness, keep me a whole evening at her side, whereas I found it a matter of difficulty to sustain a half hour's flirtation with her more beautiful, but insipid sister. Let me not, however, for a moment be understood as insinuating that Lady Elizabeth had herself any design upon me, for, though even in her most palmy days, I flatter myself she would not have treated me with contempt, and even now might think it worth her while to monopolize a person who, however deficient in merit, held, by the caprice of fashion, a very prominent rank among the Desirables, she had, I am convinced, long since abandoned all thoughts of matrimony. Her beauty, once so dazzling, was now destroyed by a heat in her face. She was no longer a girl, nor did she affect anything juvenile; her dress was matronly, and, as I have before mentioned, she had become *serious*. Her conversation with men was marked by perfect ease and freedom, which is one reason, by the by, why I always preferred the society of married women, and women as old, or even older than myself, to that of mere young ladies.

With such views and motives, (of the probability of which the intelligent reader will be as competent to judge as myself, if I have succeeded in giving him a sufficiently accurate idea of the person,) Lady Elizabeth watched the progress of the affair up to the day of the races, on which eventful day it was judged that I had afforded the strongest grounds for confidence in ultimate and speedy success. Whether her mother or sister had in the triumph of their hearts incautiously communicated what had passed in the phaeton, I know not, but I do believe that on that day, Lady Elizabeth, for the first time, seriously apprehended what she had previously scarcely thought probable, namely, my being in earnest about her sister. This I inferred from her taking occasion in conversation with me the same evening to advert to her sister in terms which, though by no means disrespectful, were calculated to convey a more unfavourable impression than openly expressed disparagement or contempt. I had been speaking of Lady Charlotte's beauty and amiable manners with warm admiration, purposely to draw her out.

"She is just what you say," answered Lady Elizabeth; "I hardly know any girl who would be more ornamental to a rich man's house."

"Ornamental!" said I, in a tone of expostulation, "is that all you can say for her?"

"What!" returned her sister laughingly; "would you have me puff her qualities like an auctioneer, or a Mrs. Metcalfe? You see what she is; she is no deep or complicated study, but may be comprehended by the meanest capacity."

"She is perhaps not a *bas bleu*, nor a *belle esprit*, but—"

"She is not exactly an idiot," said Lady Elizabeth; "no, certainly I never said so; however, numerous as her perfections may be, I'm afraid she'll not suit you."

"Really that is an honour—"

"To which you would never aspire: well, I firmly believe you. But jesting apart, as we are upon the subject, I wish Charlotte was settled, for I fear otherwise that foolish flirtation will end in something seriously silly."

"What flirtation do you mean?"

"Oh, surely you must have seen it, even without feeling any great interest in the matter; I mean young Cookson, every body observes it."

"Do you suppose they are attached to each other?"

"There can be no doubt of it; it is very absurd; he has nothing but his commission, and my mother will not be persuaded that they regard each other in any other light than as brother and sister; my only hope is that Charlotte may have some good offer, which would be the only effectual cure for this nonsense."

"Would she, think you, be so mercenary as to abandon love for the sake of money?"

"Why, I think Charlotte has sense enough to see that you may live on money without love, but not on love without money."

"But how do you dispose of the blighted affections? are not they generally supposed to be fatal?"

"I see that you are ridiculing the idea, and perhaps you are right; is there not some old saying, 'Men have died, and women too, and worms have eaten them, but not from love?' But you must not entirely judge from appearances. You may frequently see girls with blighted affections as you call them, who laugh, and talk, and sing, and play, and even flirt with more ease and freedom perhaps than before, and you never suspect that they are otherwise than happy; but you do not observe the occasional sigh which escapes them, nor do you see them in solitude, when sad thoughts, perhaps, and bitter tears replace the gaiety and smiles which are assumed for society."

Lady Elizabeth, as she spoke, was betrayed into an unusual earnestness, which led me to infer that she spoke feelingly, and indeed I had heard something about an unfortunate *affaire* which had happened to her in early life. I always respected anything like feeling, and was preparing to drop the levity of my tone and manner, when Lady Elizabeth, after remaining a few seconds in silent abstraction, returned to conversation upon some other topic, and was as brilliant and amusing as ever.

CHAPTER XXI.

The P—— races always ended with a ball, which being supported by the country people, was commonly a very gay scene: an annual jubilee looked forward to by the provincial fair with feelings of delight proportioned to the rarity of a pleasure, the mention of which rarely fails to make bright eyes sparkle, and gentle bosoms throb. The young ladies at Hotchingley, though not transported by the idea of a race-ball to the degree of the more rustic belles, were not altogether indifferent to it, if I might judge from the occasional apparition of a *soubrette* with a dazzling *slip*, or *body*, who flitted past me, in the galleries of the sleeping chambers, on the eventful day. Some very fine *demoiselles*, indeed, who thought it "correct" to turn up their noses at a country ball, affected to vote it a bore, and professed that they would not go but to oblige the Daventry's, which was highly amusing.

The day following, most of the party were to be dispersed, and I announced my intention of returning from the ball to my own house. Lord Daventry expressed his regret that he had not succeeded in persuading me to return immediately to public life, and with many obliging compliments hoped that my secession would be but temporary. The Marchioness, as far as she could, consistently with politeness, pressed me to remain, and would only let me away on condition that we were to be good neighbours. Lady Charlotte, who was present, said nothing, but eloquently seconded with her looks her mother's opposition to my departure; Lady Elizabeth, who I need hardly say declined going to the ball, wished me good-b'ye, and as I pressed her hand with sincerity—for I liked her conversation and was sorry to lose it—she whispered to me with a significant look—

"Let us always be good friends, whatever may happen; for recollect that I have nothing to do with the politics, either state or domestic, of this house;" I answered with a smile, and a nod of corresponding intelligence.

The ball was a crowded one, and a very amusing scene to me, who had not been at such a thing for some years. The rural beaux, with their varnished coats and fancy stockings,

and the belles with their happy faces and new dresses, were contrasted with a knot of fine ladies and gentlemen from town, who, according to the custom of such superior beings, deigned not to mingle with the mob, but stood apart, exercising their wits upon the poor inferior creatures, whose unsophisticated and undisguised enjoyment afforded so rich and so fair a field for their satire. Many, indeed, of the fashionables present, in open violation of the exclusive principle, not only omitted to quiz the vulgar people, but even talked and danced with them, as if they were of the *élite;* and it is the more remarkable, that the persons who were guilty of this bad taste were of a more eminent rank and character, from which one would have inferred that they should have known better. Lady Charlotte Haviland was the belle of the night, and the object of more flattery and envy, by a great deal, than any other girl in the room. So celebrated was she, that even I felt myself to derive some distinction from being her most favoured beau; and indeed I found little difficulty in guessing, from the countenances and whispers which surrounded us, that my name was pretty generally associated with her's, and in fact that we caused, what is called, a *sensation*. I shall never forget poor Cookson's face, when his mistress was whirled past him in my arms, in that most innocent and delicate of dances—a waltz!

My uncle entered the room with Miss Jackson on his arm; I had not seen him since I had gone to Betchingley, but the triumphant glance with which he met my eye, and the lady's manner toward him, satisfied me that his suit was prospering. He danced with the heiress of Elmwood, and such was his grace and address, that notwithstanding time, and still more dissipation, had marked him as no longer a young man, he was in no danger of appearing ridiculous in that situation. As soon as we were mutually disengaged, he made his way to me, and I immediately whispered my congratulations to him, on his evident success with the *ci-devant* wagoner's daughter.

"Hush!" answered he in the same tone; "it is going on prosperously. But tell me, how have you been amusing yourself these ten days past?"

"Indifferently well: I have not been employed so profitably as you, my gallant uncle."

"You seem to have had some very pretty girls at Betchingly; who is the favourite?"

"Charlotte Haviland for my money," answered I.

"What! that blue-eyed, fair, foolish-looking girl? Is it possible you admire her?"

"Indeed I do."

My uncle then began to criticise her very severely, and was making a catalogue of her imperfections, when I interrupted him.

"Stop," cried I, laughing; "you must surely think I'm in love with the girl, or you would never take the trouble of running her down at this rate."

"Why, do you know, they say so," returned Colonel Sydenham.

"Ha! ha! very good!"

"But is there anything in it really?"

"My dear fellow, you should know me by this time," I replied: "it's a pretty thing, and a well-dressed thing, and is well enough to talk, or dance, or even flirt with; but it's not to be wedded."

"Well, I never believed it, though every body asked me if it was not settled; but you must pardon my doubts, for one can never have confidence in any man, however shrewd and long-headed he may be, when a woman is concerned."

"Make yourself perfectly easy," said I; "I only hope you have as good a chance of Miss Jackson, as Lady Charlotte Haviland has a bad one of me, and you may repose in security."

"Do not suppose," answered my uncle, who, I could perceive, had been a good deal alarmed, "that I had ever any serious suspicion of such a thing; for I knew that of all young men, you were the last to be taken in: but if I were you, I would drop it at once; for if you do so after carrying it on much farther, they'll say that you have been refused, and the Daventry's themselves would most likely be among the foremost to give it out."

"This is the last scene of the farce," I replied; "I return home to-night."

"I'm glad to hear it. What, then, you have been carrying on a flirtation with the girl? My dear Mat., take care what you are about, and beware of being noted as a lady-killer, which is a character fit only for subalterns; push your fortune among the Lady Oliphants as much as you choose, but leave the Charlottes and Wilhelminas to the dandies, and, if you will profit by my precept and example, marry only when you are worn out, and are fit for nothing else." So saying, with an exquisite smile of complacency, the veteran Lothario walked away to a part of the room where his mistress was sitting, in anxious expectation of his return.

CHAPTER XXII.

It was on the third morning after my return home, that my servant entered my room, with a face full of intelligence, which led me to ask if he had any news? He answered in the affirmative, and told me he had just learned that Lady Charlotte Haviland and Mr. Cookson had been missed; that it was inferred they had departed together, and that consequently the Marquis and Lord Richard had taken the Northern-road in pursuit of them. Upon inquiring his authority I was satisfied of the authenticity of the report. Poor girl! she had doubtless eloped with her lover, piqued at being disappointed in me!

In the course of the day, I received a visit from Mr. Gaitskell, who confirmed the intelligence. He described the house as being in the greatest confusion. Lady Daventry was almost out of her senses, alternately weeping and abusing her daughter, and refusing to listen to consolation. The Marquis, in a fury, and his younger son (Lord Haviland was absent), scarcely less incensed, had, as soon as the discovery was made, put themselves in a chaise and four. Every visitor who had remained after the races, took leave. The only unconcerned member of the family was Lady Elizabeth Haviland, who coolly reminded her mother that she had prophesied what had taken place. As for Lady Margaret, the aunt, when her sister-in-law distractedly announced the event to her, she only observed, "Well, my dear, and if they were attached, why prevent them marrying, poor things? They'll do very well, for surely there's interest enough in the family to provide for the young man: I confess I'm an advocate for people following their own inclinations in matrimony."

"I think the old lady was right," observed I.

"I'm glad to hear you say so," answered Mr. Gaitskell quickly, and he cast down his eyes in apparent embarrassment, but added, after a considerable pause, half soliloquizing, "She is an excellent woman, is Lady Margaret Haviland."

"No doubt," I replied, but *quid ad rem?* thought I, my

gifted visitor might choose some more interesting topic, than the good qualities of an old lady.

"Sydenham," resumed the poet, "I propose taking up my quarters here for a day or two, if you think you can bear with my poor company."

I professed myself happy to see him, and that I should have invited him to Sydenham, had there been any attraction there which could justify me in requesting the pleasure of his company. Pleased with my flattery, he returned it in kind, and again relapsed into silence, as if he had something on his mind which he wished to communicate, but could not summon resolution to do so. Perceiving this, I offered him encouragement, by assuring him that I thought myself fortunate in any circumstance which afforded me his society, and that I hoped he would consider me his friend, and make use of me on any occasion, that it might be in my power to serve him.

"I am greatly obliged to you, my dear Sir Matthew," answered he; "and as a proof of the confidence I have in your sincerity, I will confess to you that it is in your power at present to make me your debtor."

"In what way? let me hear."

"Why, the fact is, (remember I speak confidentially,) I don't think I've been exactly well treated by the Daventry's; not that they've shown me anything like downright insult, or open slight; no, no,—but you shall hear. You know I've long been intimate with the family, and especially with Lady Margaret, who really is a woman of most highly cultivated mind and amiable character——"

"And good fortune," added I.

"Ha, ha!" said Gaitskell laughing, "I see you understand me; you view the affair like a man of the world; money is the first consideration now-a-days even to men of fortune, and what must it be to me, a poor devil who's obliged to live by his wits! Well, to cut the story short, it struck me that it would be exceedingly convenient if I could persuade our old friend to consign her person and property to your humble servant."

"Very well, and what success attended your suit?"

"Why, perfect success as far as she was concerned; now don't laugh,—but when the family began to suspect what my object was, their manner immediately changed, first extremely cold, and has lately become almost rude, so much

so, that I no longer found it agreeable to remain in the house."

"And what do you propose doing?" I inquired.

"That is the point upon which I am doubtful, and want your advice. I do not wish to disoblige the Daventry's, who have given me to understand that my marriage with Lady Margaret would be a total breach with them; and indeed to acknowledge the truth, Lord Richard—who, by the by, is a d—d overbearing insolent puppy—has long been declared his aunt's heir."

"That is, before she saw you."

"Just so; before she saw me,—ha! ha!—Well, what do you think? he had the impertinence privately to warn me against carrying my attentions to Lady Margaret beyond a certain length, for if I attempted to work upon the folly of an old woman, he would take care that I should suffer for it, and that he would cause me to be cut by all his acquaintance. Did you ever hear such a piece of insolence? It would be mean in me to pay any regard to it, eh?"

"Why, you will let your own feeling decide that point."

"True; not that I think it was a slight particularly shown to me, for I'm sure he'd have said the same to any man whom he suspected of designs upon his aunt; but I think I need not be deterred by his menace, (for such it may almost be called,) which I believe he has not the power of executing."

"I should hardly think so."

"For instance," said Gaitskell, "he would not be able to persuade you to cut me, Sydenham?" and he gazed at me anxiously.

"Certainly," I returned, "I am not conscious of any influence which Lord Richard Haviland possesses over me."

"And you would say a word in my defence, if you should hear me abused?"

"My good friend, I should be the last man in the world who would join in abusing you for marrying Lady Margaret Haviland; I have no expectation of coming in for a share in her thousands."

"Then d—n his threats!" cried Gaitskell, starting up with great glee; "your name is a tower of strength, so let Master Richard and his friends cut me and be d—d!"

"Well," said I, "now that you have my *sanction*, when do you propose becoming the happiest of men?"

"Very soon; in fact at the first opportunity. I have effectually opened the old lady's eyes to the mercenary nature

of the attachment which her relatives profess for her, and she has declared that she will marry me in spite of them; the only hesitation indeed was on my part, for the reasons which I have mentioned to you."

After remaining with me a couple of days, during which he assiduously cultivated my good graces, Gaitskell took his departure, in order to prepare for his union with Lady Margaret Haviland; who, shortly afterward, in open defiance of her family, quitted Betchingley, and took a house in town. It was about a month after, that I read the following paragraph in the newspaper.—"Marriage in High Life. On Monday, by special license, in Wimpole Street, Cavendish Square, Henry Gaitskell, Esq. of Charcombe in the county of B——, to the Lady Margaret Haviland, third daughter of the late Earl, and sister to the present Marquis of Daventry."

CHAPTER XXIII.

The religious commotions (if I may so style them) which agitated the parish of P——, as I have described in a former chapter, had by no means subsided; on the contrary, they raged if possible with still greater fury, and there was no prospect of their speedy abatement. The Methodist preacher was daily making proselytes, notwithstanding that Lord Daventry's displeasure fell heavily upon every man within his power who seceded from Dr. Haviland's congregation. These severities, I need hardly say, inflamed, rather than pacified or intimidated, and many, who felt no great gust for Mr. Lanky's doctrines, sent in their adhesion to that leader, by way of asserting their independence after the fashion of true Britons. Mrs. Clinton preserved a dignified mean between the contending parties, each of whom she denounced, in her barn, as equally godless, pretty broadly hinting, at the same time, that she alone was to be considered infallible. These religious animosities produced, of course, domestic dissensions. One member of a family steadily adhered to the Establishment, another held to the Dissenter, and a third, perhaps, maintained the divine inspiration of Mrs. Chilton, who, by the way, took a point by these distractions, for she triumphantly quoted them as a sign of the times, and a harbinger of the battle of Armageddon.

I would [illegible] have persuaded myself that the P—— factions were [illegible] indifferent to me, but so strong a feature of human nature is party spirit, that though I despised them heartily, and myself for taking any interest in them, I could not divest myself of some feeling upon the subject. I must say, however, that from my situation, I was, to a certain degree, obliged to enter into it. Dr. Haviland had requested that I would follow the example of his brother, and punish my tenantry who neglected to attend at church; but I declined sanctioning such violent measures as being not only unjust and tyrannical, but calculated to defeat their object. At the same time, the impressions which I had received of the odious character of the sect of Methodists, and of the mischievous tendency of the Chiltonian doctrine and system,

made me desirous of ridding my neighbourhood of those nuisances. But this was a difficult and a delicate enterprise; for John Bull is the touchiest of animals about anything which he fancies to concern his paramount liberty, especially when he knows that he is acting with wrongheadedness. Already had I become unpopular with all parties; I had disobliged Dr. Haviland by refusing to accede to his arbitrary wishes; Mr. Lanky had included me in the fulminations which he launched against "the proud men, who should have a speedy and a terrible fall," and Mrs. Chilton's disciples were well aware that I had expressed my disapprobation and contempt of their oracle. I experienced many instances of disrespect also from the peasantry.

Under these circumstances, I deemed it expedient to proceed with the utmost moderation; and to use remonstrance and persuasion rather than any kind of menace or compulsion. I visited in person the greater part of my tenantry; from some I received assurances of undiminished attachment to myself and Dr. Haviland. Others were sullen and silent. A third set answered my expostulations with cant and insolence. "The time was fast coming," they said, "that the world and all its pomps and vanities would be at an end; that the wickedness of the gentlefolks had brought it on; that we should soon be all equal, except in holiness; that the ungodly, and them as oppressed the poor, would then be punished; that God knew no distinction of persons; that the Lord was to be preferred before man," and the like.

At one of the cottages where I called, the tenants of which had been represented to me as respectable people, but devoted followers of Mrs. Chilton, my visit happened at a moment, which, curiously enough, afforded a practical illustration of the beauties and advantages of that worthy person's system. As I approached the cottage, my ears were saluted by the sound of voices from within, evidently wrangling. I tapped at the door, but my knock being unheard amidst the clamour, I took the liberty of raising the latch. Upon entering, I found the good woman sitting at one corner, applying the end of her apron to her eyes, from which the tears were flowing fast. Near her stood a young girl with her head tossed up in sovereign contempt, and in the middle of the floor was a man with an angry countenance, reproaching and reproving his daughter, as the damsel appeared to be. My sudden appearance of course caused much surprise and confusion. The woman started up, and endeavoured to compose her counte-

nance; her husband stammered forth something between an apology and a welcome. The girl alone deigned not to be in the slightest degree moved at my presence. I asked what was the matter?

"I beg your pardon, Sir Matthew," answered the man, "for receiving you in this kind of manner; if I had been worthy to know, Sir, that your honour was going to call—"

"Make no apologies, Mr. Pollard; I fear that I've intruded unseasonably, for you seem in great confusion."

Pollard looked at his daughter, as if doubting whether he should disclose the cause of the commotion, and I perceived him encounter an imploring glance from his wife, who seemed to interpret his hesitation, and to be anxious to save her child from exposure.

"I don't care," said her husband resolutely, "I will shame her before the gentleman; Sir Matthew shall know what an undutiful hussy she is."

"It's more the fault of them as have teached her such wickedness, than the poor child's own," answered the wife; "I'm sure, John, a sweeter tempered, more dutifuller little girl never was, afore she went to that Mrs. Chilton. I'm sure I wish she'd never a-seed her face;" and the poor woman again burst into tears.

"Well, and whose fault was it that Betsy ever did see her face, eh Missis? didn't I say from the first, that the end of all this here fine schooling would be, that the girl would come to scorn her parents? Did'nt I say, what's the good of larning to a girl as 'ave got to arn her bread? Yet you would have your own way, and now you see what's come on't."

"Well, I'm sure I can't help it," sobbed the poor, afflicted, humiliated wife, "I never thought 'twould be so."

"Never thought 'twould be so! no, to be sure not; but I know'd it along: and wasn't it continually dinned in my ears, what a fine thing 'twould be for Betsy to be hedicated? Damn hedication, I say, if it teaches a child to fly in the face of her natral parents. But women is such fools!"

"Oh, John, don't ye go to be angry with me; you know I spoke for the best, and thought it would be all for the child's good."

Miss Betsy—and by the way, the slut was exceedingly pretty—now interposed to speak for herself, and addressed herself to me, with much pertness and confidence.

"Sir Matthew, I can inform you of the meaning of all this

to-do, in a very few words. My father and mother, who are very good people in their way, but I'm sorry to say, as you see, very ignorant and prejudiced—"

"Hold your tongue, hussy, this moment!" cried her father; "how dare you speak to Sir Matthew?"

"I've spoken to as good a gentleman as Sir Matthew," retorted the girl, "and that, perhaps, you'll know one of these days."

"You have, have you, you wench? and more shame for you to own it; what business have you speaking to a gentleman? That comes of your hedication again; you'll come to no good, girl, and will disgrace your poor parents I'm afeard."

The poor man then proceeded to detail to me the cause of the disturbance in which I had found them. It appeared that this girl had been a favoured pupil of Mrs. Chilton, who, upon completing her education, had procured her a situation as servant in the house of a respectable tradesman at P——; that she soon became disgusted with the humility of her situation, and quitting it, returned home to her parents, who could ill-afford to support her in idleness, for the purpose of enjoying, as it seemed, literary leisure; for her own expression was, that she was desirous of improving her mind. From her poor father's account, however, it appeared that she was not wholly occupied in sedentary and intellectual pursuits. Much of her time was spent out of doors, her parents knew not where; and when they attempted to inquire how she disposed of herself during her absences from home, she treated the question as an invasion of her liberty, and answered with sufficient brevity, but little satisfactoriness. On the preceding day she absented herself, and did not return home until that morning, when she was greeted with a severe reproof, and a peremptory demand to be informed where she had passed the night. At first, my young lady would only reply, that she had visited a friend in P—— who had persuaded her to remain the night. Her father insisted upon knowing who the friend was, but this demand, so authoritatively made, Miss Betsy as resolutely refused to satisfy, affecting to consider it as a high breach of her privileges, and burst into bitter complaints and invectives against her father for the suspicion which she said it implied; she would have them to know that her character was unspotted, and she scorned their insinuation. This elevated tone, however had not the effect of awing her father into silence, and there ensued a scene of re-

crimination, in which the pupil of Mrs. Chilton taunted her parents with ignorance and folly, and ended by saying, that it was beneath her to contend with them.

"'Tis a cruel case, Sir Matthew," said the poor man, as with a faltering voice, and eyes glistening with tears, he concluded his story. "My wife and me is but poor people, but we've worked our way honestly through the world, and have got nothing to reproach ourselves with in our old days, thank God; and it's a cruel case, Sir, that we should be brought to shame and trouble by an only child, who ought to be a blessing to us in our old days, instead of a disgrace, as I'm afear'd she will be, if she an't already, and all through Mrs. Chilton; for, as my missis said, a better disposed and more dutiful child never was, afore she got all this schooling."

I could offer but little consolation in a case like this, of the distressing nature of which, I was nevertheless fully sensible, for a poor man has feelings as well as his betters; and though they might not be susceptible of those refined miseries which are known only to the favoured children of fortune, they are equally capable of being wrung by those substantial sorrows, to which rich and poor are alike liable. I expressed, therefore, to these unfortunate parents my sympathy with their afflictions; and then addressing myself to the girl, gave her to understand, in pretty strong terms, my sense of her conduct, and offered her so much good advice, that if any of my gay acquaintances had been present, they would assuredly have been greatly surprised or amused. Her parents listened with much satisfaction to my reproof and counsel, and turned to their daughter to observe what impression they made upon her. But she only gave her head an additional toss of contempt and defiance, and when I had ceased to speak, muttered something saucy, and flung out of the house. I could do no more, so I advised the poor people to be resigned to their misfortune, for I could encourage them with no hope of the amendment of their daughter, who, I candidly told them, I was pretty well convinced from her manner, was no better than she should be. If any of my afore-mentioned gay friends had been present, they would perhaps have informed the old people that I was no bad judge of such a matter.

CHAPTER XXIV.

I CANNOT here omit to describe a curious conversation which took place at this time between me and a person, with whom the reader has already been made slightly acquainted. I mean Ball, the late mayor of P——, by whose agency I had been returned for the borough. I believe that most boroughs, both rotten and sound, have a master-mind who *manages* the matter, and whose influence all the parties concerned, acknowledge, though none can give you a satisfactory reason why he possesses it. Perhaps, however, few of those master-minds were gifted with the qualities which constitute the character in such an eminent degree as my friend Ball. He was, in fact, the most completely clever fellow I ever met with in his class of life; not even excepting my own man, Nicholls, about whom there was rather too much bustle of pretension. The ex-mayor of P—— was likewise endowed with an effrontery which nothing could daunt; and when he was in a jocular mood and knew his company, he could be exceedingly pleasant upon the subject of himself and his conduct. In fact, he was proud of being called a knave, for he said (or it was said for him) that the epithet implied a superior mind; and he was flattered at having his assurance admired, because it was an evidence of moral courage. The reader is aware how he used me. It was chiefly by his intrigues that I was deprived of that control over the one seat for P—— which remained in my family, after it had abandoned half of the borough in order to strengthen their tenure of the remainder. He then treated with me as a stranger and took my money, in consideration of which I was duly elected; but because subsequently a more advantageous offer was made by Lord Daventry, he hands over without a moment's hesitation the whole concern to that noble Lord. The Havilands, however, who were versed in every variety of political intrigue, threatened to prove too many for a man who, however great his ability, was familiar only with provincial practice. They feared, no doubt, the personal power of Ball, as having too much the character of an *imperium in imperio*, and

their first measure after getting into the borough, was to put a plot in operation, the object of which was, to deprive Ball of his influence, and to vest it in some other person who should be a mere tool of their own. The sagacity of the ex-mayor quickly discerns his danger, and takes prompt and vigorous measures against it. He sees that the popular feeling of P—— has taken a religious complexion, and forthwith he forsakes Dr. Haviland's congregation, and sends in his adhesion to Lankey, to whose party he is an important acquisition. But he takes a step of still greater importance. He agitates and canvasses actively, and secretly and suddenly raises up the banner of Reform, under the very nose of the noble Marquess, who starts back at the horrible apparition, like the Jew in Scott's romance from the uplifted shield of brawn.

Ball's plan was, in fact, nothing less than to open the borough. Several attempts to this effect had been made by adventurers, but had been frustrated by him, and indeed the scheme was hopeless, while he continued to support the corporation interests; but, now, that he opposed them, there was little doubt that he would succeed, supported as he was by all the town's-people, who, under the existing system, were deprived of the elective franchise. And whom, think you, was Mr. Ball pleased to select for the instrument of his purpose? Your humble servant. Yes, it is true that this Sublime of impudence did not hesitate to come to my house and invite me to become a candidate on the independent interest at the next vacancy—me, the representative of that family whose property this borough had been for two centuries, to be returned on the popular interest, at the nomination, and under the patronage of Thomas Ball, burgess and tallow-chandler!

"If you come forward, Sir Matthew," said he, "I pledge myself that the thing is done. You are the person naturally pointed out to achieve the independence of P——."

"Which has so long groaned under the yoke of the Sydenhams," interrupted I.

"Ha, ha! Sir Matthew, that is an objection more specious than solid: the borough, you are aware, has for some time ceased to be under the control of your family, and you really are the one above all others, best qualified for such an undertaking. You are politically hostile to the Marquess; you have distinguished yourself in the Liberal party in Parliament; and last, though not least, you are a gentleman. Sometimes you see, in attempting these things, we are obliged to

[illegible] men who have no sort of recommendation [illegible] personal or adventitious; but you are a gentleman [illegible] have proved yourself to be highly talented—a lord, [illegible] possess all the necessary qualifications in a minor degree."

"My dear, dear good friend—I may take the liberty of calling you [illegible] for making this proposal, which comes [illegible] from a man, who is generally allowed to have been, for many years past, the governing spirit of this country, a person who [illegible] the disposal of the [illegible]——"

"Why, Sir Matthew, you're [illegible] there's such a thing as honesty in the world."

"I believe there may be," answered he; "for I recollect having read [illegible] that honesty was a devilish high-sounding [illegible] and the remedy which [illegible] was a ridiculous combination of promises, and I don't [illegible] to be desired effect, for the patient with a little [illegible] and I [illegible] this, they are good for nothing, and [illegible] them as soon as you can."

"Bless me, Sir Matthew, what a memory you have got! I remember having said something of the kind to your father many years ago in [illegible], when you were present, and you've remembered it ever since. It was about a lemon, I think, who was asking his worship's son as to wished."

"My father took it as in jest, however, and the poor lemon found it a very serious matter for I likewise recollect that my father having tried your two first-mentioned remedies without effect, dropped the latter, and turned the man with his wife and family out of doors."

"Oh, Sir Matthew, that was very wrong: I would'nt give such advice even in jest now. Times are altered since then; the people are determined to be slaves no longer, and I think we, who are embarked in the glorious cause of freedom, have the most [illegible] prospects. The Reform Question, Sir Matthew, is gaining ground rapidly."

"What, because the present system no longer 'works well' to P——, I suppose? Since you let in the Havilands, you find your occupation in a fair way of being soon gone,—is not that the case, Mr. Ball?"

"Sir Matthew, we must forget and forgive: if I had any share in that transaction, I can only candidly admit that I was wrong, and that I am ready now to atone for my error by doing everything in my power to repair it. We are fallible,

short-sighted mortals, Sir, but I can safely say that whatever I may have done I did for the best."

"I believe you, my good friend; you no doubt did what you thought best for your own advantage: your advocacy of Reform reminds me of a horse-dealer of my acquaintance, who, finding his business falling off in consequence of his roguish tricks, determined to adopt the principle of honesty by way of speculation."

"He! he! he!" chuckled the chandler; "I can stand a joke as well as any man, Sir Matthew, and one never takes offence at what one of you witty gentlemen say, because you mean nothing; only speaking in the way of your trade, as it were, like a parson or a lawyer—you'll excuse me Sir Matthew?—he! he!"

"And you've lately turned Methodist likewise, I understand, Mr. Ball? that is a suspicious symptom."

"I beg pardon, Sir Matthew, but that's no joke;" answered the ex-mayor, sucking in his jaws as if to smother a smile at the ludicrous sense of his own impudence and hypocrisy. "These sacred matters are *tabooed* ground, as the politicians say, and have nothing to do with business; I am one of those who think that Reform, like Charity, should begin at home. I have been very remiss hitherto, I'm sorry to say, but I've now come to the resolution of turning over a new leaf."

"And open a fresh account of debtor and creditor, with prayer and piety, as a set-off against sins and peccadilloes—eh? I admire your new faith, Ball; it is an excellent improvement upon Romanism, for while it affords you the same practical latitude, instead of obliging you to pay for your sins in hard cash, it accepts prayers and promises."

"Hush, hush, Sir Matthew! 'pon my life you're too bad; you'll excuse me again? But let us return to business: I hope I am to understand that you consent to my proposal; you observe, Sir, that I pledge myself to the success, if the attempt is made."

"And pray what would be the expense of such an undertaking?"

"Oh, about a thousand or fifteen hundred or so; but if I manage it (and I'll be bound to say nobody else could do it,) it shall be done as reasonably as possible. But the expense is no object to you, Sir Matthew; it's the credit and honour of the thing, and then people would say how generous and noble for a gentleman, whose family had the borough in their hands for such a series of generations, to come forward and

voluntarily throw it open—Only think of that, Sir Matthew! what a character you would get for disinterestedness!"

"Then I am the only person you think who could successfully attempt it?"

"Oh no, by no means, Sir Matthew! only you are the person by whom it could be easiest done, and I would not take any measure about it until I had given you the refusal of it, because I have a high respect and regard, Sir Matthew, for your family; and besides, you yourself are a gentleman with whom I like to have dealings, although you do cut me up so, but that's your way, and I don't mind it. However, if you, Sir Matthew, refuse to come forward, I can find plenty who'll be glad to do it."

It was natural however, for every reason, that he should urge me very strongly to become the popular candidate. In the first place, he knew that I should be *good pay*, of which he would not be at all sure, were he to have recourse to any professional *borough-opener*. Secondly, my appearance would afford him a signal triumph over Lord Daventry, upon whom he thirsted for revenge. On every account I was the most eligible person. For my own part, I rather liked the scheme, and therefore, without committing myself positively, I encouraged him to hope that I would be forth-coming at the time. Meantime it was agreed upon that it would be expedient to observe the utmost secrecy with respect to my intentions, and Ball was only to state generally, that "a gentleman of distinction would offer himself to the electors of P—— at the next vacancy."

CHAPTER XXV.

I HAD certainly no cause to pique myself upon my address in the present instance, for I must frankly acknowledge, I do not believe that I succeeded in detaching one of his followers from the standard of the Dissenter. On the contrary, when it became known that I had been making the attempt, my unpopularity greatly increased, and I was hooted and hissed by the raff, as I rode through P——. So strongly, indeed, had the turbulent spirit of the people become manifested, that there was an apprehension of actual outrage, and consequently it was deemed expedient for the magistrates of the district to assemble, in order to take into consideration whether any, and what extraordinary measures should be adopted, in the present circumstances.

At this meeting, the Marquis of Daventry (who had returned from the ineffectual pursuit of his daughter, the fugitives having reached Scotland, and been united many hours before he and his son could overtake them,) presided. He and Lord Richard, whom I there encountered for the first time since Lady Charlotte's elopement, greeted me with marked stiffness, of which I seemed to be unconscious, although I both observed and understood it. In fact they were, with respect to me, in the painful situation of persons, who have been outwitted, and treated with contempt by another, and yet are, from the nature of the offence, precluded from taking any notice of it. Lord Richard would have given the world to call me out, if he could, by possibility, have so avenged the insult which I had offered to his sister.

The opinions delivered on the subject, for the discussion of which we were convened, were as various as the speakers. One gentleman uttered a long and solemn dissertation on various general matters, such as the danger of suffering the people to gain the upper hand; the democratic character of the Methodical persuasion; and the necessity of their being firm and vigilant in these times, when there was a growing conspiracy against property, &c., and concluded by emphatically stating his opinion, that *something must be done*, to which sagacious remark there was a general nod of consent and approbation.

Another, who was a staunch alarmist, advocated the "strongest measures," and even went so far as to recommend that the military should be sent for. He was reproved and answered by one of those flippant, profligate coxcombs, who fancy themselves, and are called, "devilish clever fellows:" a fair specimen of that class of youth whom poor Auriel described as having made up their minds on every subject of morals and politics, before they are out of their minority. This young gentleman had lately succeeded to a good estate in the neighbourhood, and had been an unsuccessful candidate for a radical borough, at the recent election. He told the last speaker, who was a plain, elderly man, that he was behind the age; that the fact was, the present times required concession; that the old order of things could not last much longer; that "the wisdom of our ancestors" was a cant, which could be no longer used without exciting ridicule; that there should be a free trade in religion as well as in other things; and that the secret of the matter was, that the people never would, nor ought to be quiet, until the tithe was abolished.

Lord Daventry urged the impolicy of temporizing, which would make the people still more insolent and overbearing, as it would imply intimidation, and earnestly recommended the gentlemen of the county to combine, and follow his example, namely, ejecting every tenant who manifested disaffection to the church. This system, he said, was the most certain and rapid cure for the disorders which prevailed. This proposition was supported by Mr. Jackson, who said, that he perfectly agreed with the Marquis, who had remarked that these were times, when it behoved every man of property to come forward and make common cause against their enemies; that he had himself once entertained what were called liberal opinions, but that he had seen reason to modify those opinions; that he was exceedingly jealous of the slightest infringement upon the church, the safety of which he considered to be inseparably connected with that of the landed aristocrasy. "I cordially approve, therefore, of the proposition of my noble friend," added he, "and if we wish to preserve our own, my persuasion is that we must be unanimous; and by adopting this vigorous and decisive measure, prove that we are determined not to yield an inch."

The arbitrary proceeding suggested by Lord Daventry, and so strenuously seconded by Jackson, was warmly reprobated by an amiable nobleman, whose general benevolence and

consideration for the comforts and feelings of his humbler countrymen placed within his sphere of action, had won for him the affection and respect of his tenantry, which should be the first object, and highest happiness of every landlord. His sentiments were, that a totally different course to that recommended by Lord Daventry, should be taken. He earnestly advised the Marquis and Mr. Jackson to desist from that rigorous system which they had already put in practice, and which had greatly exasperated the people. He hoped also, that his motive would not be misunderstood, and that he should not be deemed guilty of presumption, if he ventured to suggest to Dr. Haviland the propriety and policy of moderating his tone, which he knew had been animadverted upon by the parishioners, as inconsistent with the humility of a Christian pastor. Gentle remonstrance might be used, when the present heat had subsided; for he knew that much, if not the greater part of the zeal and intemperance which then existed, arose less from conscience, than a spirit of opposition, to what was considered insolent dictation and oppression. In no event could compulsion be resorted to with permanent effect; patience and moderation would allay irritated feelings; reason and reflection, which were at present suspended, would resume their functions, and the good sense and sound doctrine of the regular divine would ultimately prevail over the extravagance and hypocrisy of the ignorant Methodist. To this mild and judicious counsel I cordially gave my assent, and many of the magistrates, who had seemed to be infected with the arbitrary spirit, simultaneously joined with me in expressing their approbation of the excellent nobleman's sentiments. Dr. Haviland, however, thought it necessary in his own defence to make some comments on what had fallen from his Lordship. Without dismissing from his features that eternal smile,—which, free as I trust I am from vulgar prejudices, I have always regarded as a bad sign of a man,—Dr. Haviland answered Lord F., and in doing so, I could detect the irritation of his temper, although he endeavoured to mask it under an extraordinary blandness of manner. He protested that no one could lament more sincerely than he did the unhappy circumstances which had called them together that day, especially as he was necessarily involved in them, and feared that his conduct had become a subject of censure to many gentlemen, whose good opinion he highly valued, but who could not accurately understand his situation. He declared that he viewed the

schisms among his flock more in sorrow than in anger, and that the course which he had pursued, was the one which his humble judgment, upon mature consideration, pointed out to him as the best. God forbid that he should forget what conspicuous places humility and conciliation held in the catalogue of Christian virtues; but at the same time he was aware that firmness and fortitude were equally essential to the character with which he was invested. However disposed he might be, from private feeling, to treat the misguided persons with lenity, it was his duty to recollect that (however unworthy) he was commissioned to expound the Word of God, and that it was incumbent upon him steadily to uphold the authority of those doctrines, which were derived from the only authentic source, and were sanctioned by the laws of his country, and the maintenance of which he believed to be as necessary to the prosperity of the nation and the integrity of its establishments, as they were salutary to the souls of their professors. If, therefore, any gentlemen had come forward promptly to manifest their determination to support the church by the most decisive measures, he was not one who could either impugn their motives, or disapprove of their proceedings. I will not hazard wearying the reader with any more of these details; let it be sufficient to say, that the meeting having rejected Lord Daventry's proposal, the Marquis politely declined to sanction, by his presence, the consideration of any other, and accordingly left the room in a huff. Another magistrate was thereupon called to the chair, and a good deal of talking ensued, the end of which was, that nothing at all was agreed upon, and the meeting adjourned *sine die*.

But though inoperative itself, this meeting was attended with fearful consequences. Exaggerated reports of violent sentiments and tyrannical counsel, uttered thereat by Lord Daventry and Dr. Haviland, got abroad. The rancour of the mob was stimulated by the ignorant, but crafty and designing vagabond, who then controlled the elements of popular fury. Within a week after the ill-starred assembly of the magistrates, several valuable barns and outhouses at Betchingley were burned to the ground: and early the following morning, before intelligence of this outrage, perpetrated in the night, had reached P——, Dr. Haviland, while walking in the garden of the glebe-house, was fired at from behind a hedge with such precision of aim, that the ball was instantly fatal.

CHAPTER XXVI.

The coroner's jury which sat on the body of the unfortunate rector, not being furnished with evidence tending to criminate any person, returned a verdict of murder against some person or persons unknown. Lord Daventry, however, who seemed to be much affected by his brother's catastrophe, persevered vigorously in endeavouring to detect the perpetrator of the crime, whom probability justified the public suspicion in connecting with the destruction of the barns at Betchingley. For some days, these efforts were fruitless, but, at length, a train of circumstances transpired, the effect of which was, to cast strong suspicion upon one individual, as both the incendiary and the assassin. That individual was James Rock, the man with whom the reader was made acquainted in the early part of this volume. The evidence, which was immediately communicated to me as the nearest magistrate, caused me to send a warrant for his apprehension, and also induced me to issue a second for the arrest of Joseph Lanky, calling himself "reverend," who appeared to me to be implicated in the proceedings.

The suspected parties were easily found and brought to my house, when, assisted by a neighbouring magistrate, for whom I had sent, after having forwarded intimation of the expected disclosures to Lord Daventry, (who was prevented by indisposition from attending,) I proceeded to examine them, according to the information of which I was possessed. The preacher was much agitated, but Rock's manner was that of obstinate determination. For some time, he firmly denied everything which could implicate him, but at length, my brother-magistrate having detected, and instantly taxed him with, a discrepancy in his evidence, he was obviously confounded, and, after a few moments' silence, acknowledged his guilt, to the horror and confusion (which, whether real or affected, I am, to this day, doubtful) of his spiritual friend. He then, without demanding any condition, made an unreserved confession of every particular, connected both with the burning of Lord Daventry's barns, and the murder of Dr. Haviland, which crimes he declared that he alone had ac-

complished. He earnestly asseverated that Lanky had neither instigated, nor abetted, nor was privy to, these acts. Upon asking him what were his motives for committing such enormities, he answered,

"I had long had it in my mind, that the Lord had singled me out to work his vengeance on these proud men. I a'n't sorry for what I've done; and my only regrets is, that I sha'n't be able to do the same by the Marquis of Daventry as I did by his brother." Here the preacher uttered an exclamation of horror.

"The Lord knows he never learned such wickedness from me, gentlemen," said he, casting up his eyes; "the poor misguided sinner has often heard me say that we should forgive our enemies, and pray God to turn their hearts."

"Ay, that may be, Mr. Lanky," rejoined Rock; "but I had a *call* for what I did, and many's the time I've heard you preach, that God gives calls to sinners to work his will."

"I never said so!" cried Lanky earnestly; for he was evidently in apprehension, lest he should be involved in his disciple's guilt; "I never taught any such thing! the Lord forbid that I should ever encourage my flock to transgress the laws of the country! I hate your crimes, man, and I hope they'll be punished as they deserve: 'twas the devil, and not God, that tempted you to commit them; so don't attempt to bring me forward as your authority; I utterly disclaim and abhor such evil doings."

"We are all poor erring mortals and sinners, Mr. Lanky," returned the criminal; "but I didn't think to be cast off in this manner by you, any how, 'specially after I'd heard you say often and often, that if so be as a man h[illegible]h faith, it didn't matter what his works was, and that if he did wrong from a right motive, he would be excus—"

"Oh! James Rock! James Rock!" interrupted the terrified preacher; "Satan must be driving thee on thus to distort my doctrine, and to bring me into suspicion before these gentlemen. Believe me, Sirs," he proceeded, addressing himself anxiously to us, "my heart never conceived nor my tongue uttered anything to give this man the shadow of an excuse for his deeds of darkness; I never did, as I hope for mercy."

At these words the wretched self-convicted criminal, who had hitherto resolutely preserved composure, and seemed to have been sincere in his professions of having acted purely

from fanaticism, grew deadly pale, and a vivid expression of agony was depicted in his countenance.

"What!" he exclaimed, "is this the way in which you eat your words, Mr. Lanky? do you deny all that you used to say about grace, and faith, and predestination? have'n't you told me that I was one of the elect, and no longer in sin, whatever I might do? And when I thought I was doing an acceptable thing in slaying the false shepherd and the oppressor, was I deceived and humbugged all the while? The Lord have mercy upon me, I am a miserable man! Oh, my poor wife and children, what will become of ye? I shall die a disgraceful death! Oh, Sir Matthew, for the love of God have pity on me!"

The poor deluded wretch here laid his head on his hands and burst into a passion of tears. The demure cowardly scoundrel who had certainly caused the mischief, if he had not exactly designed the effect which had been produced, was again about to speak in vindication of himself, but I prevented him.

"Are you not ashamed and overwhelmed with remorse," said I, sternly, "for the misery and crime of which you have as undoubtedly been the promoter as if you had expressly enjoined the commission of such atrocities? How dare you, an ignorant and uneducated person, take upon yourself to be a teacher in the most momentous and difficult of all subjects, and impose upon ignorance still more brutal than your own, although associated with purer intentions, doctrines absurd and subversive of all morality? But your whole conduct since you have been in this neighbourhood proves you to be a designing scoundrel, and I only regret that the law does not empower me to punish you as you deserve. Get away with you, fellow, and I sincerely hope that the poor, weak, ignorant people whom you have imposed upon will be brought to a sense of their folly by the disclosure which will soon be made public, and that they may drive such a nuisance out of the neighbourhood."

The crest-fallen preacher essayed not to reply, but incontinently sneaked out of the room, congratulating himself, no doubt, on escaping so easily. As for his unhappy victim, Rock, he had fallen into a state of insensibility, and was thus removed, fully committed to prison, to await the assizes. Upon his trial, his guilt being fully proved, he was condemned on the first indictment, which charged him with the murder of Dr. Haviland. He died, manifesting the deepest penitence,

and conjuring the people who surrounded the gallows to go to their church, and shun Methodist preachers, who had been his ruin. I had promised him that I would provide for his wife and children, and thus had the satisfaction of relieving the poor wretch's last moments from much poignancy.

As for Lanky he disappeared without ceremony; within a few hours after I had dismissed him, he bade adieu to P——. Lord Daventry was annoyed at my suffering him to escape, being of opinion that he might have been made amenable. I never heard what became of him subsequently. His departure, however, and the induction to the living of P—— of a very worthy man, greatly contributed to restore tranquillity to the parish. Its most gracious majesty the Mobility indeed seemed at first disposed to express its displeasure at the harsh treatment of the individual who had been the instrument of executing its wild justice, (as Lord Bacon styles the noble passion of revenge,) against the ill-starred Rector who had offended it, but being soothed by the assurance of his successor that his wish was to cultivate friendly relations with its high majesty, it was persuaded again, in a great measure, to patronize the Church; as if it should say, "You having courted our alliance, and expressed your disapprobation of the conduct of your predecessor, we return to your communion, from which we seceded only to show our independence, and as a saving of our right."

CHAPTER XXVII.

Having dismissed these local matters, which I fear the patient reader will have voted a bore, however much they may have interested me, I resume the other concerns upon which I have endeavoured to fix his (or her) attention in this part of my Memoirs.

And in the first place it is worthy of note, that a day or two before I left Betchingley, I received a letter from my friend Palmer, who had returned to town to attend his public duties, Parliament having met before Christmas. Among the political gossip which this letter contained was the following piece of information.

"But there is a report concerning yourself, my dear Sydenham which I can hardly believe, and, let me add with the candour of a friend, of which I should be glad to have your contradiction. It is said that you have intimated, through Lord Daventry, your adhesion to ministers, and that one of the members for P—— is to take the Chiltern hundreds in order to let you in on Lord D.'s nomination. I have heard it moreover stated, as a settled thing, that you are to marry one of the Ladies Haviland. I think it is right also to let you know the report that the engaging your adherence to Government was one of the conditions upon which the next bisoprick was to be given to Dr. Haviland, Lord D's brother. Do not misinterpret my meaning in mentioning these things. After the gallantry and integrity which you displayed during your political career last session, it is impossible for me to doubt the purity of your motives, whatever you may do; and if you have really determined upon giving your support to Lord Tewkesbury, I shall firmly believe that you have conscientiously changed the opinions which you held with regard to his administration on its first formation, and although such a step will cause us to sit on opposite sides of the House, it will produce no diminution of my esteem for you, nor, I trust, of our intercourse and friendship. At the same time I don't like to hear your name lightly spoken of in connection with these rumoured arrangements, nor do I think it warranted by

friendship to be restrained by any spurious delicacy from warning you against becoming *the victim of a job*. I know that you are not to be easily imposed upon, but these Havilands are old hands. If you can afford me any explanation which will enable me to give any decisive answer to what I hear said, I shall feel gratified; but if it is not convenient to you to grant me this favour, I do not press it, satisfied that time will confound those who are disposed to be your slanderers. You may be sure, however, that I do not require your authority to contradict every statement, insinuation, and remark, which I hear to your disadvantage."

The court which had been paid me by Lord Daventry and his unfortunate brother was thus accounted for, and my conjectures as to the cause were corroborated. I of course wrote to Palmer a satisfactory answer, at the same time assuring him that I was not desirous that he should take any notice of the gossip about me, as time would sufficiently refute it. I assured him likewise, that there was no truth in the report which gave me to Lady Charlotte Haviland. On the same day that I heard of the elopement of that young lady, I received a letter from my friend, expressing in warm terms the pleasure which my letter, denying my rumoured tergiversation, had afforded him, and likewise that of Lady Eleanor on learning that I was not going to marry into the Haviland family, whose character she disliked. In this letter Palmer used many friendly arguments to seduce me from my resolution of not returning for the present to political life, assuring me that if I would consent to re-enter the House of Commons he would undertake to find me a seat without any trouble or negotiation on my part. I thanked him for the kind interest which he took in me, and sincerely professed myself to be elated by the flattering manner in which he and his friends mentioned my name, but still declined, for the present, yielding to his and their importunities.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A few days after the celebration of the race ball, which has been commemorated in these pages, my uncle returned from Elmwood. My first word was of course to inquire the result of the main object of his visit, which I judged from the elation of his countenance and manner had been crowned with success.

"You are right," said he; "I am accepted."

"I cordially wish you joy," returned I; "and when is the happy event to be consummated? This place is at your service to begin with for the next six months, (if you choose,) during which I intend travelling."

"Thank you," replied Colonel Sydenham; "but the thing is not absolutely settled: observe, I have got the young lady's consent only as yet; the more important acquiescence of her father is still to be obtained; you know she has not a shilling independent of him."

"True, but his consent will in all likelihood accompany his daughter's affections."

"I am not sure of that; old Jackson, I suspect, looks for connexion, and it is very natural that he should."

"Well, and he will have it by marrying his daughter to you; our family is sufficiently respectable and well-connected to satisfy his scruples on that head, I should think."

"But he probably expects rank, which he knows his wealth can purchase, and I fear that he is not aware of my utter want of fortune."

"[illegible] intended has enough for both."

"No doubt, but that is considered no argument in such cases."

There was a pause of a few seconds, during which my uncle looked thoughtful.

"Matthew," said he, "you must give me all your countenance in this affair; we must endeavour to manage the old fellow:—will you accompany me to open the business to him?"

"Most willingly," answered I.

"Then let us name to-morrow," rejoined my uncle, "to call at Elmwood."

On the following day, accordingly, we rode over to Elmwood, and having inquired particularly for Mr. Jackson, were ushered into his study, where we found him engaged with his steward, who, upon our entrance, gathered up his papers, and prepared to withdraw. We begged that we might not interrupt business, but Mr. Jackson desired us to be seated, observing, indifferently, that he was not occupied with anything important.

"Well, Burgess," said he to his steward, as he was leaving the room, "you may offer Mr. Sotheby five-and-thirty thousand for those eight hundred acres; I won't give more, for they're not worth it, and I don't care much about them either," (here my uncle gave me a significant look:)—"it is some land of young Sotheby's," he proceeded, addressing himself to us, "which he's obliged to sell, to pay a gambling debt, I suppose; he's an unfortunate young man, that, and will soon be a ruined one, all through that detestable vice of play: well, God protect me from ever having anything to do with a gamester!"

Here I, in my turn, looked significantly at my uncle, who was evidently disconcerted. The reader is to be reminded that Mr. Jackson having but recently become a member of the great world, was lamentably deficient in that knowledge of fashionable history, which is as familiar and interesting to the persons composing that society, as political affairs are to the community. It was therefore extremely probable that both Jackson and his daughter should be ignorant of the character and conduct of Colonel Sydenham, his being rather an old story. Indeed, he had himself more than once adverted to the subject, and had asked me whether I thought it likely that the Jacksons were acquainted with certain passages in his life, which he was naturally anxious to conceal from them, under existing circumstances.

"I know," he would say, "that they are aware of my not having exactly led the life of an anchorite, and I shall not suffer in the girl's opinion by having been a little wild in my boyish days; but there are some of my adventures which it is as well they should know nothing about, at least until I am secure. Neither fathers nor daughters like a man who has the character of being addicted to play, which, as you know, is a little infirmity of mine, and one that I wish especially to keep in the back ground."

The last observation of Mr. Jackson therefore, uttered, as it appeared to us, in a peculiarly emphatic tone, somewhat humbled the elevation of my uncle's spirits, and checked the confidence with which, notwithstanding the conversation that passed between us on the subject the day before, he was prepared, upon the whole, to propose himself as a candidate for the hand of the heiress of Elmwood.

The conversation, which turned at first upon the topics of the day, was constrained and vapid, as such conversation usually is, when the minds of the parties are occupied by other and more interesting matters. Mr. Jackson's manner was moreover stiff; this was alarming. At length after an interval of awkward silence, foreseeing no more favourable opportunity for introducing it, he summoned all his resolution and address, and entered upon the interesting topic. He spoke with all the apparent warmth of sincerity of his admiration for Miss Jackson, and the deep esteem and affection with which she had inspired him. He adverted also to the errors and extravagances of his early life with much delicacy and good taste, and declared that they could not be visited by a heavier punishment, should he, in consequence of them, be prohibited from paying his addresses to the charming young lady who alone possessed his heart; but he hoped that he should find credit and confidence, when he protested that he was an entirely altered man, that he had derived a lesson from experience, and that his only wish and object was to live quietly, and devote himself to the happiness of the wife of his most ardent love. He concluded by saying, that if he had Mr. Jackson's approbation of his suit, he should consider himself the most fortunate of mankind.

Jackson listened to him with a serious and attentive countenance, and when my uncle had ceased, replied to him as follows:—

"Colonel," said he, "I'm a plain man, and speak my mind, so you must not be offended at what I'm going to say, which I should never have thought of mentioning, but for what you have just now let fall with respect to my daughter. I'm no Methodist or Canter, you see. I know that young men will be young men, and that many a rake, after he has sowed his wild oats, has turned out a steady man, a good husband, and a worthy member of society;—I don't deny all that, but it has lately come to my ears, Colonel, that you're in the habit of handling the dice-box, and I could not consent to give my child to a man who had such a propensity. No

offence, I hope, for we're speaking now in the way of business. I know very well, that at least every other man of fashion is a gambler; but I'm no man of fashion, but a plain country gentleman, and as such I have an insurmountable prejudice against the practice. During the time that I've had the pleasure of your acquaintance, I've seen nothing in you which was not perfectly the gentleman, and I'm very sorry indeed that this objection must oblige me to decline the proposal which you've done me and my daughter the honour to make."

"I devoutly hope," returned the Colonel, after a pause of deep contrition, "that your decision is not final. To be deprived of your good opinion would of itself, I need perhaps hardly assure you, after the friendly intercourse which has for some time past subsisted between us, give me great pain; but when that loss involves the destruction of my dearest hopes, it is really more than I am able to bear. I admit with sorrow and shame, that I suffered my imprudence and thoughtlessness to carry me even to the verge of vice, but however unpardonably I may have acted, I may say with a safe conscience that my extravagancies never proceeded from cold-blooded profligacy, but from the faults which I have mentioned, and which time, and suffering, and reflection, have cured. I entreat, I implore you, therefore, my dear friend, not so peremptorily to crush my hopes, and to believe me to be what I represent myself. As to dice, believe me, I abhor the mention of them; I have suffered too much from them, ever to endure the sight of them again."

"Well," muttered Jackson, partly to himself, after a pause of hesitation and reflection, "I hardly know what to say about it, but if I was disposed to put faith in your assurances, Colonel, it would be necessary to inquire about fortune, and such matters. You are aware that Mary Anne is my only child; if she marries with my consent, her husband will be paid 80,000*l.* on her wedding-day, and will be my principal heir, provided, of course, she does nothing to displease me."

"Although I will candidly acknowledge to you," said my uncle, "that I could not afford to marry without money, Miss Jackson's wealth and expectations are in my eyes her least attraction. As for my pittance, I should be ashamed to name it in comparison with her fortune. I am but a younger brother, you know, my good Sir."

"Colonel Sydenham's principal fortune, I believe," said I, "is an estate in Shropshire, yielding about two thousand

per annum, in which he has a life interest, the remainder being in myself or my heirs." So saying, I gave my uncle an intelligent smile in reply to his astonished and inquiring look.

"Well, then," replied Mr. Jackson, "Colonel Sydenham is a man of honour, and if I consent to his paying his addresses to my deughter, I may depend upon his word that he will never again indulge in a vice which may in a moment reduce both himself and my child to beggary. In every other respect, I shall be proud to have you for my son-in-law, Sir. I may, therefore, now refer you to my daughter, Colonel, and if her answer is satisfactory, we may then talk of ulterior arrangements: or if you please, I will myself convey to her the proposal which you have done her the honour to make." Colonel Sydenham begged that he would so do, and the old gentleman accordingly left the room. As soon as the door was closed, my uncle turned to me with a countenance of triumphant satisfaction, and then asked me what the devil I meant by his estate in Shropshire, when I knew that he had not an acre of land in the world. "I'm sorry you said anything about it, because, though it answers our present purpose, it may involve us in a labyrinth of lies hereafter, when it turns out that there is no such thing."

"I meant what I said," replied I; "the Shropshire estate, you recollect, was my mother's jointure; I had heard my father say, that if he survived her, that property should be your's for life. As, however, the contingency upon which you were to enjoy it did not happen, and as his sudden death prevented him, in all probability, making an alteration in his will, which contains no mention of your name, I feel that I am only acting according to his intentions in making over to you for life that estate, now that it is relieved of the charge which was to have precedence of your interest in it."

"How can I thank you for this generosity?" replied my uncle with his sweetest smile, and most graceful manner, at the same time pressing my hand, "for though you are certainly acting only according to your father's wishes, there are many young men who would not think it necessary to observe so nice a sense of honour; I am indeed most obliged, nay, grateful to you, my dear Matthew."

"There is one request, or condition, if you choose so to style it," answered I coldly, "with which I must beg leave to accompany this surrender of the Shropshire property, namely, that you are sincere in your professions to Mr. Jackson

of having relinquished play; for however loosely we may have talked together, let me assure you that I am the last man in the world who would be party to any scheme of deception, or sanction any abuse of the confidence of a respectable man, or the happiness of an amiable young lady. You will, I am sure, like myself, see the propriety of dropping the levity with which we may have heretofore spoken of Miss Jackson; and whatever may have been your motive in marrying her, I am persuaded that you are too much a man of honour, when you have become her husband, not to promote her happiness, and fulfil her hopes to the utmost of your power."

"My dear fellow," replied Colonel Sydenham sharply, "I hope I do not need such a solemn exhortation to my duty as you have been at the pains of giving me; I flatter myself I shall act like a man of honour in any situation. But," added he, recovering his self-possession, and smoothing his ruffled countenance into one of those detestable smiles,—"I appreciate your motive; you know that I have been a wild dog; but my sporting days are over now, and my earnest wish is to live henceforth soberly and godly; so make your mind easy, for I assure you I shall turn out a very respectable husband."

The conversation was here put an end to by the re-entrance of Mr. Jackson, who was the bearer of the welcome tidings that his daughter had listened with an indulgent ear to the suit of Colonel Sydenham, whereupon that gallant person of course thought it necessary to be transported, although, as the reader is aware, he had taken the precaution previously to ascertain the young lady's sentiments. At the instance of the happy father we remained to dinner. The bride elect, during the day, was all blushes and confusion, which, however, at length disappeared under the assiduities of my uncle. Mr. Jackson kept up a continual correspondence of winks and grins with me, and was very facetious upon the occasion, to the great annoyance of his daughter, who, upon each of his jokes, (some of which, to say the truth, were not of the most refined description,) would blush and remonstrate with, "La, papa, how can you go on so?" at which the old gentleman would be exceedingly tickled. After dinner, in order to leave the "young people" together, Mr. Jackson engaged me in conversation, which chiefly turned upon the extent of his property, his improvements, and his skill in agriculture, insomuch that I was heartily glad when the hour arrived, at which I might order the carriage. Before our departure, the happy

day was fixed, and it was an early one, at the earnest desire of the impatient bridegroom.

"I shall see you to-morrow, and every day," whispered the lady, with a love-sick smile, as her intended took his leave.

"Most undoubtedly, dearest—Miss Jackson," answered Colonel Sydenham, as he gracefully pressed her yielding hand to his lips. The young lady sighed—her elderly gentleman bowed—and retired.

CHAPTER XXIX.

"D—n the courtship," said my uncle, "I'm glad it won't last long, for I'm sick of it already."

"You don't seem to undertake it with any great *gout*," returned I: "'dearest Miss Jackson' was rather frigid; you seemed undecided what appellation was to follow the epithet; —I could hardly keep my countenance."

"I intended to have used the Christian name, but I couldn't bring my tongue to Mary Anne; ugh! it's a name only fit for a chambermaid."

"What's in a name? besides, you needn't use it; you may call her Mrs. Sydenham."

"I'm afraid she's a sad dowdy—what think you? is she presentable?"

"She has eighty thousand *down*, and large expectancies."

"True," rejoined my uncle, in a reconciled tone; "that covers a multitude of sins."

"Her style is not particularly good, perhaps, but I think she is amiable—not the sort of a girl who would put your forehead in jeopardy."

"I'm glad of it," said Colonel Sydenham, "for if she was to do anything of that sort I should be obliged to divorce her, and refund her fortune."

"I think you're a very fortunate fellow."

"Very."

The conversation dropped.

Mr. Jackson signified his intention of celebrating the marriage of his daughter with all possible publicity. A special license was to be obtained; the Dean of —— was to be asked to officiate, and a large party was to be invited to the wedding. A milliner was sent for from town to superintend the bride's dress, and he himself presented her with a splendid case of diamonds. The forthcoming event was likewise announced with much pomp and circumstance in the records of fashion. The old gentleman in short, was in a delightful state of fuss, complacency, and importance. The parties principally interested willingly acquiesced in these preparations. The bride liked to be the centre of so much show and splendour, and my

uncle hoped that it would dazzle those who might be disposed to find faults in the match.

As soon as the business was agreed upon, Mr. Jackson issued cards to all the neighbourhood for a grand dinner, at which Colonel Sydenham was to be introduced as the future husband of the heiress of Elmwood. The Daventry family were of course asked, and, contrary to expectation, they accepted the invitation. The dinner took place only a few days before the murder of Dr. Haviland.

It was amusing enough to observe the alter[illegible]ers to ward my uncle of certain persons who had [illegible] treated him with marked coldness, but [illegible]o thought that the accepted of the heiress of Elmwood, was a very different [illegible]on fro the spendthrift, superannuated *vaurien*, which the had previously considered him. My uncle being a politician, took no notice of the sudden cordiality which these persons evinced, but returned it in kind, and acknowledged by grateful pressures of the hand those hints and congratulations upon his approaching good fortune which some ventured to put forth.

The party from Betchingley were, the Marquis and Marchioness, Lord Richard and Lady Elizabeth Haviland. The latter I was surprised to see, it being contrary to her habits to go into public. I guessed that she had come to gratify her malice. I heard her tell Miss Jackson indeed, that only such an extraordinary occasion would have induced her to come out, but she could not resist the pleasure of congratulating her friend upon her felicity, by which special favour Miss Jackson was duly flattered. As for Lord Richard, he offered his compliments with an air of insolent, sneering *nonchalance*, which was inexpressibly insulting. The poor girl felt his offensive manner keenly, for her face crimsoned with mortification and resentment. He completed his gentlemanly conduct by retiring with another person into a corner of the room, and entering into a conversation, ever and anon interrupted by that suppressed laughter, which proves that somebody or something present is the cause of their mirth. Colonel Sydenham affected not to take notice of this conduct, but I saw by the red spot in his cheek, that it did not escape his observation. It would have been a great gratification to his feelings, no doubt, (judging from what my own would have been in his situation,) to have kicked Lord Richard Haviland out of the house.

After dinner, upon my returning to the drawing-room, I took my seat by Lady Elizabeth, who, upon seeing me ap-

proach, readily made room for me on the sofa where she was sitting. "Can you explain to me," said I, "why Lady Daventry will hardly look at me, for I protest that I have a conscience void of offence toward her?"

"I cannot tell," answered Lady Elizabeth, "unless she fancies that you had some concern in Charlotte's elopement, which has engaged all her thoughts and conversation ever since you left Betchingley."

"How [illegible]hat possible? I was not in the confidence of either [illegible]er or Mr. Cookson."

"Oh, [illegible] my own part, I don't at all doubt your innocence; but pray let us dismiss this subject, for I hear no other at home, and as I seldom go out, I may reasonably expect, when I do, a little variety. Is not this a strange match?" said she, sinking her voice to a very low tone, for old Jackson was within ear-shot,—"for I conclude you were equally guiltless of having anything to do in bringing this about."

"I think," answered I, "that my uncle is a very lucky man to have secured such an amiable and highly gifted young lady."

"Amiable as she may be, and highly gifted as she undoubtedly is, I am inclined to think that it must be his poverty, rather than his will, which consents to such an alliance. I remember the time when he would not have been seen speaking to such a person as he is now about to wed. But what will not money do, and what will not men do for money?"

"Why, as respects disinterestedness, my dear Lady Elizabeth, I'm inclined to think that your sex is at least upon a par with mine. Marriage is, in fact, a kind of commercial transaction, which each party possesses something which the other requires; money is exchanged for connexion, beauty for fashion, and so on; but as for a connexion—I beg pardon, I should say a marriage founded on mutual affection, I believe that is an idea which never enters the head (except it be *une tête exalté*) of any person who lives in the world after five-and-twenty."

"You forgot my sister!" said Lady Elizabeth, with a smile of malicious meaning.

"Oh, I cry your mercy; Lady Charlotte's unquestionably disinterested match did not occur to me, but the exception proves the rule."

A few minutes after, Miss Jackson happened to be passing in the part of the room where we were sitting, when Lady Elizabeth called her.

"Oh, pray don't let me disturb your *tête-a-tête*," answered the young lady.

"Come here, my dear; Sir Matthew and I have been talking you over, and admiring the sensible and suitable choice which you have made."

"Oh!" answered she, blushing and casting down her eyes with an air of prettiness.

"There is something so disinterested and unlike other foolish girls," pursued Lady Elizabeth, "in marrying a man without fortune, and who has come to a steady time of life; for if wealth and youth are at all necessary to happiness in matrimony, you, my dear, have enough for both."

"Now you're quizzing me, Lady Elizabeth, I'm afraid."

"Quizzing you, my dear child! not I indeed! But I really take a great interest in you, partly, I believe, because you are so like my sister; your manner, your style of dress, everything about you reminds me so much of Charlotte—I only hope you may be happier than she is likely to be, poor thing!"

"I think I have every prospect of being happy," whispered Miss Jackson.

"No doubt you have; but however great you may fancy your stock of felicity to be, I would recommend you, as a bride, not to be too lavish of it, lest you should find, like many a young friend of mine, at the end of the honeymoon that you had none left. I don't go so far as my poor friend Sheridan, who thinks it advisable to begin with a little hating, but I certainly would not have you be too extravagantly happy at first."

"Oh, my dear Lady Elizabeth, you terrify me out of my life! I should be the most miserable of creatures if I were to observe the least indifference in my husband, even after we had been married a hundred years, if it were possible."

"Now, what do you say to that, Sir Matthew! there is devotion for you."

"I shall not despair," said she, addressing Miss Jackson, "of your reclaiming your nephew that is to be, who is such a railer against our sex, to an opinion, that there is some virtue extant."

"On the contrary," answered I; "for as I observed before, the exception proves the rule."

Miss Jackson being called away to another part of the room, my uncle came up, and addressed Lady Elizabeth, whom he had as yet scarcely spoken to that evening.

"Well, Colonel Sydenham," said she, "so you're going to be married at last; am I to congratulate or condole with you, for I remember when you and I were friends twenty years ago, alas! you seemed to think matrimony the greatest calamity that could befall you?"

"Ah, Lady Elizabeth," returned my uncle, "every period of life has its feelings and opinions: who would ever have thought that you, the gayest of the gay, the admired of all admirers, could have abandoned a world which seemed to be your element? I am sure it is far less extraordinary, that I, a despiser of matrimony, should have no other ambition now than a quiet, domestic life."

"You need not make any apology for such a praiseworthy change of opinion; I wish you all prosperity in your new speculation."

"It is a tolerably sure speculation," returned my uncle, humorously, but in a low tone, to avoid being overheard, "where a round sum is paid down, and there are large expectancies which can hardly be defeated."

"Oh fie! how can you be so mercenary? I meant nothing of that kind."

"But what else should you suppose I meant, Lady Elizabeth?"

"Now, indeed, you are too bad; I was in hopes that you were reformed, but I find you are still the same as ever. Oh, you men of the world!"

"I hope you did not pay me so bad a compliment, as to suppose I had grown better at the expense of my taste."

"Upon my honour, I will not listen to you; but at all events, I hope you mean to behave well to the poor girl?"

"Behave well to her! most certainly; I flatter myself she will always experience from me the treatment of a gentleman."

"The treatment of a gentleman!" echoed Lady Elizabeth in her turn; "that is, I suppose, that you will not abuse her either with blows or words. Behave to your wife like a gentleman! Oh, defend me from such a lord and master!"

"Why, what would you have me do? you would not expect a man of my time of life to act the devoted lover like a romantic young hero of two-and-twenty?"

"Oh, I shall not attempt to argue with you; you are quite incorrigible."

"What the deuce made you talk in that profligate manner

to Lady Elizabeth?" said I, to my uncle, when we were left together.

"I did it on purpose," answered he; "I knew that she would ridicule my marriage, and when I spoke to her, I saw that her mouth was full of severe things about it, so I determined to be beforehand with her. She was always a bitter pill, and is now ten times worse, since her own views have been disappointed, which is the cause of the religion and abandonment, and contempt of the world which she affects. She is one of those witty, malicious women, who are like nettles; appear afraid of them, and they will sting you, but handle them boldly, and they are harmless."

CHAPTER XXX.

The week before the marriage was occupied with the necessary arrangements, my uncle being absent in town. On the day that he returned, the Jacksons dined with me. On the following day, settlements were to be signed, and the bride's fortune was to be paid, and on the succeeding afternoon, the ceremony was to be performed, at my house, by special license.

Nothing could exceed the satisfaction of the parties interested at the approaching consummation of their felicity; manifestations in which I joined for the same reason, for, indeed, I was quite tired of all this harmony and happiness, and felt truly glad that there was now an end of it, as far as I was concerned. In this sentiment, it is shocking to relate, that the bridegroom elect must himself be included, for as soon as the Jacksons were gone, he anticipated me by bursting into a self-congratulation, that the period of his assiduities, devotions, and delights, were now terminated.

"You surprise me," said I; "I always understood that the courtship was the most charming part of the business."

"It may be," answered Colonel Sydenham, "when you marry for love; but trust me, it is up-hill work, when you marry for money."

"Well, thank Heaven, it's all over now!"

"Thank Heaven it is," echoed my uncle.

And all over it was, in good earnest, although not in the sense in which either of us spoke or suspected! I must hasten to the catastrophe of this, the most painful and disgusting passage of my memoirs. I almost doubt, indeed, whether I shall stand excused for recording such depravity.

On the following day, the horses were at the door which were to carry us to Elmwood to sign and seal, and my uncle to receive that blessed document which was to make him master of eighty thousand pounds, when a servant entered the room, and handed my uncle a packet which he said had just come from Elmwood, that the man who brought it, de-

sired that it should be delivered immediately, and that there was no answer.

"What the devil can it be about?" said my uncle, as, with nervous haste, he broke the seal. From the envelope dropped two enclosures, the one, a dirty, vulgar-looking, wafered epistle, which had been opened; the other was a note, I observed, in the handwriting of Mr. Jackson. Colonel Sydenham glanced at both, and immediately his countenance grew deadly pale. He then devoured each successively, dashed them on the table, and covering his face with his hands, muttered a deep damnation!"

"What is the matter?" inquired I; "bad news, I fear?"

"Matthew, I'm undone!" cried my uncle; "I'm baffled—ruined—Read, read," and he pointed to the disastrous letters which lay upon the table, and by a deep imprecation, accompanied by a coarse phrase which he used as he strode down the room in great agitation, gave me to understand that in this instance, as well as in most others, (according to the misogynists,) a woman was at the bottom of the mischief.

I first opened Mr. Jackson's note, which was, to the best of my recollection, couched in the following terms:—

"Sir,—The accompanying letter, which awaited Miss Jackson on her return home from Sydenham Park last evening, was, by her, put into my hands, with a desire that I would inquire into the truth of the statements therein contained, and if they were substantiated, that I would inform you of her unalterable resolution never to complete her engagement with you, and to decline all farther communication or correspondence with you.

"Early this morning, therefore, I sent for the person whose signature is attached to the above-mentioned letter. She immediately obeyed my summons, and has satisfied me by the most unequivocal proof of the truth of the allegations contained in that document.

"It is perhaps scarcely necessary for me to add, that my daughter's resolution in consequence meets with my entire approval, and would have been enjoined by me, had it not originated with herself.

"The offence which you have committed, is, in my opinion, one of the most dishonourable and odious nature; and when I consider the time and the circumstances under which it has been committed, it appears to me to argue a character of the most hardened depravity. As a man of right feeling, I shun

all connexion with one who could be capable of such an act; and as a father, I feel indignant at the insult offered to my child.

"Your recent proceeding is of a piece with the accounts which I have heard of your former conduct, and which should have warned me against having anything to do with you; but I had hoped that those vicious propensities had vanished with your youth, and that you were really now, as you seemed, and represented yourself to be, an altered man. I lament that I have been deceived, although, at the same time, I am glad that I have discovered you, before it was too late.

"I again repeat, that neither myself nor my daughter wish to have any farther intercourse with you.

"I remain, Sir,

"Your obedient [illegible] servant,

BENJAMIN JACKSON."

"Did you ever know such an old, canting scoundrel?" said my uncle, as I closed this letter, but reading in my serious countenance, I suppose, no encouraging degree of sympathy, he added, "I hope you intend to stand by me, Matthew, at all events?"

"I cannot answer that question," I replied, coolly, "until I have seen the contents of the letter referred to by Mr. Jackson." So saying, I opened the dirty epistle aforesaid, which I transcribe for the benefit of my readers:—

"HONOURED MADAM,—"I have paused long before I could make up my mind to take this decisive step, which I do under feelings of the deepest poignancy, and most acute suffering! Madam, the report some time since reached my ears, that you were about to be united to Colonel Sydenham, but with the confidence of a too trusting and yielding nature, (which having little knowledge of the world, thinks that others are as true and generous as itself!) I scorned to give credit to the rumour, for if there was faith to be reposed in the most solemn protestations, I knew that man to be mine, and mine only! I reproached him, however, with it, but he denied it, (with an oath!) at the same time applying epithets to you which I will not repeat; and I could not believe him false, who had so frequently sworn that he was devoted to myself! But he is (like all his sex!) heartless, false, and perfidious! It was only a day or two since I discovered (beyond the possibility of doubt) that the distracting intelligence was too, too true!

I charged him with it a second time, yesterday; he hesitated at first, but I told him that he was a villain! and he no longer denied it! He then had the presumption to offer me money, but I rejected it with disdain! and told him that I would have revenge!

"Thus, Madam, you see I am the miserable victim of the arts of a fascinating seducer, who knows (alas!) every avenue to the heart of woman! He told me that he loved, and I (too credulous!) believed him, and loved again! I will not weary you with farther particulars, but suffice it to say that I am in a *delicate situation!*

"Such is my simple tale! and I trust, Madam, it will have the effect of warning you against adding another to the list of unhappy females, who have (doubtless) been deceived by this fair-spoken, but faithless, elegant, but dangerous man!

"Hoping to be pardoned the liberty I have taken,

"Allow me to subscribe myself, honoured Madam,

"Your dutiful, humble servant,

"ELIZABETH POLLARD.

"P. S. I can prove all that I have said, if necessary."

Really, serious as was its import, I could hardly forbear smiling at this tawdry epistle, which I perceived from its signature was the composition of Mrs. Chilton's favourite pupil, the daughter of the poor people, whose distresses on her account I have ventured to record some pages back. It was written in a mincing hand, small and fine, carefully pointed—a second or third copy, no doubt,—and evidently intended, not less as a sampler of the writer's literary talents and refinement, than as a statement of her wrongs and misfortunes.

"Well, most noble judge," cried my uncle with bitterness, for he was nettled at the grave countenance which I wore while perusing these evidences of his profligacy; "What is my sentence?"

"To be candid with you," answered I, "I can't consider this as any joke."

"Joke! no, faith! I wish it was: the game is up in that quarter, to a certainty—Well, damn it, what care I? there are other heiresses in the world besides this wagoner's daughter, and I fancy that my chance is not yet altogether

desperate: but as for that —— —— she had better keep out of my way, for I could not answer for myself."

And in truth it would have done a stage-villain good to have taken a lesson at this moment from my uncle's countenance, which assumed the most diabolical expression that I had ever yet seen in a human face infernal.

"I'm afraid," said I, quietly, "you must abandon all hopes of advancing your fortune in that way; at least, it will not be in my power to forward your views in any other case, as it will not suit me to be identified with your character and pursuits."

"What! you're setting up for a saint, are you?" cried my uncle rudely; "you're going to cant about immorality and seduction, because I have happened to amuse myself, an occasional hour, in this dull place with a paltry *soubrette*— ha! ha! ha!"

"I'm no saint, Sir, but I'm not ashamed to acknowledge that I look upon a man who, to satisfy a brutal passion, will abuse the great advantages of birth, education, and knowledge of the world, and recklessly ruin the character and happiness of a young woman, however humble, and bring disgrace and misery upon her friends, as guilty of a most odiously selfish, base, and flagitious proceeding."

"Bravo!" cried my uncle: "Why this is in the true Joseph Surface vein; or have you taken a lesson from what's-his-name, the Methodist fellow, whose disciple was hanged the other day?"

To this, I made no reply; and my uncle continued to stride up and down the rooom in great excitement. During the silence, a servant announced to him that a person wished to see him.

"What person?"

"A young woman, Sir," answered the man. "She didn't give her name, but said you'd know who it was, Sir."

"Ha! show her in," vociferated Colonel Sydenham.

CHAPTER XXXI.

The stranger was accordingly ushered into the room, and proved to be, as the reader will have suspected, no other than Miss Pollard. Observing the furious countenance of my uncle fixed upon her, she looked alarmed and hesitated, as if irresolute whether to come forward, or retire.

"Shut the door you scoundrel, and don't stand gaping there," cried my uncle to the servant, who obeyed with considerable alertness. "Now," he proceeded, turning to the visitor, "what is your business with me?"

"Oh! Colonel," answered the trembling girl, "don't look so angry at me; I'm sure it's I that have cause to complain; my father has discovered my situation, and turned me out of doors; you've been the ruin of me, Sir, and now you look at me as if I was dirt."

"Ruin!" yelled my uncle; "Ruin!—and what is the ruin of a thousand such reptiles, compared to that which you've brought upon me? Look here, hussy!—damned hussy!" and as he spoke he seized her own letter and that of Mr. Jackson, and thrust them in her face; "Look here, d'ye see what you've done?"

The terrified girl immediately recognized the cause of his wrath, and uttering an exclamation, dropped upon her knees before him.

"Oh! Colonel, dear Colonel, forgive me! I did it in a moment of passion, and have bitterly repented since. Oh, pray have mercy on me!"

"Then go this instant to Mr. Jackson, and swear that it was all a lie—a conspiracy—a thing of your own invention—go, and I'll give you a thousand pounds!"

"I can't, I can't—he's seen—I've showed him—the notes—your hand-writing."

My uncle uttered a horrible exclamation of rage and dismay, the foam stood in the corners of his mouth, and his features were distorted with the most demoniac fury, as he made a motion toward the wretched girl.

"He'll kill me!" she screamed, and rushed toward me; "Oh, save me!"

My uncle, in his madness, struck at her, but I quickly interposed, and warded off the blow. My blood now began to boil. "Cowardly ruffian!" I exclaimed, "would you commit murder?"

His fury was now diverted upon myself. "You dare not," said he, in a voice almost choked with passion; "you dare not use such language, unless you thought you might do so with impunity; but here is my reply," and he struck me so violent a blow on the chest, that I staggered, and fell against the table. Had he smitten me with a feather, however, I could not have been more insensible to the physical part of the insult which had been offered me. I felt all the blood in my veins rush to my heart, my limbs trembled, and sickness came over me. I had been disgraced by the foulest indignity which one man can put upon another: if it had proceeded from an indifferent person, my course would have been obvious; but here the perpetrator was my father's brother, an individual who stood in the same kind of relationship to me as the parent who gave me being. The thought of remaining passive under this vile stain was intolerable; the only alternative, which presented itself, seemed little better than parricide. While these suggestions passed rapidly through my mind, I stood motionless, and Colonel Sydenham advanced to me with an insolent sneer and said, "You are a philosopher, Sir Matthew, I am aware, and perhaps, therefore, can receive a trifling blow without emotion."

"Colonel Sydenham," I replied, with as much self-possession as I could command—"for it is impossible, after what has taken place, that I should address you by any other appellation—I understand your meaning, and though God knows I should have gladly preferred any calamity to such a one as this, the outrage which you have committed must be expiated."

"Bravo! I'm happy to find that you don't intend to cast an imputation on your mother, for the Sydenham blood was never known to brook the slighest injury. Let it be immediately, however; you are a good swordsman; I have two weapons of an equal length; your own man and my servant shall be present to witness fair play,—Do you agree?"

I could only give a nod of assent, and my uncle with affected coolness, but with a face pale as death, and a trembling hand, rang the bell.

"Desire my servant," said he to the attendant, in a tone of

indifference, "to bring the two small rapiers from my room, here immediately."

"And send Pearson here," added I.

When we were left together, pacing up and down at different sides of the room, (for I should observe that the girl Pollard, almost dead with fright, had stolen away at the commencement of the quarrel between my uncle and myself,) Colonel Sydenham, turning to me, observed,

"If you have any affairs to settle you had better take pen and paper, for this will be no child's play."

"I have nothing to arrange," answered I; "should I fall, *you are my heir*," and I looked at him steadfastly. His eye fell beneath mine.

"And I," rejoined he, taking no notice of my last remark, "have neither a guinea, nor a friend in the world, so there need be no delay on my account—ha! ha!"

"For God's sake," said I, "reflect upon what you are going to do; express your regret for what has already passed, and let us not proceed to these dreadful extremities; I will accept any apology, as I in some measure gave you provocation, for which I am willing to say that I am truly sorry."

"Candidly confess," answered Colonel Sydenham, in a tone of insufferable insolence, "that you have a dastardly spirit, and that my brother was a cuckold."

Remonstrance, I now saw, was useless, and the two servants at this moment entered the room.

"I have brought both the rapiers and the foils, Sir," said Colonel Sydenham's valet, "for I thought it was them you wanted, though Robert told me it was the swords."

"Robert told you right; push that table against the wall, and remove those chairs out of the way."

The man stared a little, but did as he was ordered. Colonel Sydenham then locked the door and put the key in his pocket, next divested himself of his coat, and I followed his example; he then handed me one of the small swords, which were precisely similar, and himself took the other. I explained briefly to the servants the purpose for which they were summoned, and informed them that the quarrel which had arisen between Colonel Sydenham and myself was of a nature which did not admit of accommodation, and that neither would offer nor accept an apology. They attempted to expostulate, but were silenced by my antagonist, who told them, that if they attempted to interpose, they would do so at the hazard of their lives.

These preliminaries being settled, we moved opposite each other. My determination was made, though I should sacrifice my own life, not to spill the blood of my father's brother; my plan, therefore, was the defensive, or to disarm my adversary, of which I had little chance, as he possessed superior skill, although now much agitated, while the dreadful situation in which I was placed prevented me from recovering my usual self-possession.

I parried his assaults for some moments successfully; he began to lose temper, and pressed fiercely on me. I now watched for an opportunity of disarming him—attempted it—was baffled by the superior science of my antagonist, and being left open, he made a lunge full at me. His sword passed through my body on the left side, between the ribs. He immediately extricated his weapon, and throwing mine away, I rushed upon him, and after a sharp but desperate struggle, succeeded in wrenching it from his grasp. I then broke it across my knee, and, utterly exhausted in this last effort by loss of blood, I fell down in a swoon.

CHAPTER XXXII.

As soon as I recovered my senses, Pearson, who, judging my wish to have the affair kept as secret as possible, had suffered no one to approach me except the Surgeon, informed me that Colonel Sydenham, having ascertained that my wound was not likely to be of fatal consequence, had left the house in a chaise, accompanied by his servant and baggage, without leaving any message, memorandum, or note for me.

After this intelligence, my first anxious inquiry was, whether any of the servants were aware of what had taken place, or suspected the nature of my illness. My valet, who was a faithful fellow, and much attached to me, having been about my person since I was a boy, assured me that he had every reason to believe they were entirely ignorant of the transaction, and that he had himself washed the blood from the boards, the rencontre having fortunately taken place in a room uncarpeted, it being the apartment in which my uncle and I had occasionally practised with the foils, which, as it happened, we had been using that very morning. Commending Pearson for his precaution, and enjoining him, as he valued my confidence, never to disclose what he had witnessed, I felt at ease, for my secret was secure in the professional honour of my medical attendant.

My next care was about the poor girl who had been the unconscious, though not innocent cause of the affray. I instructed Pearson to find her out, and to carry a letter to her parents, in which I apprized them of Colonel Sydenham's abandonment of their child, whom I begged that they would again receive under their protection, in the hope that she might be reclaimed, as her conduct proceeded less, perhaps, from natural depravity, than from extreme youth and a bad education, acted upon by an accomplished profligate; and, of course, I offered them whatever consolation and assistance money could afford. My messenger found the cottage of these poor people the abode of misery indeed. On the table was extended the dripping corpse of their daughter, which two men had about an hour previously dragged from the river. The wretched parents

were in the most frantic grief, cursing my uncle and themselves as the joint causes of their child's unhappy end— the former as having ruined, and themselves, who had, by casting her off, driven her to the fatal act of desperation. The frailty of the deceased—her undutiful and ungrateful conduct was now forgotten, while with a perversity not unusual in such circumstances, those beauties of person and flimsy graces of education, which had been her ruin, were extolled, magnified, and lamented. In this state of violent and indiscriminative sorrow my message of peace and condolence was unheard, and the mention of my name only occasioned a new burst of execration; though, when their first transports had subsided, the poor people acknowledged my good intentions, and acquitted me of being, in any shape, accessary to the ruin of their child.

This business gave me such a disgust to my uncle, that even if I could have forgotten what had taken place between us, I do not think I could ever have reconciled myself to associate with him again. Cold-blooded and dissolute as I knew him to be, I had hoped that he was not deficient in a sentiment of generosity and honour, which would have deterred him from so rascally an act as this. True, I was aware that he had been engaged in several affairs of gallantry, and that these could not be excused by the force of passion, because love, delicate and romantic, was a refinement unknown to his nature; but he had vanity, an equally powerful agent, and one which much more frequently influences in such cases. But in this instance vanity could hardly have been his motive, for to one who had made conquests of the highest class, a peasant girl would have been too humble a triumph. He had therefore for the transient gratification of a brutal passion coolly ruined a human being, who, however lowly her station, had a heart to be corrupted, a character to lose, happiness to be blasted, and friends to be bowed down with shame and sorrow! Such conduct appeared to me most selfish, base, cruel, and unmanly, and alternately excited my indignaton, and contempt.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

My wound, though not dangerous, was tedious, for I was confined to my apartment nearly a month, and at the end of that period, although liberated from confinement, I had not sufficiently recovered my strength, which had been exhausted by considerable loss of blood, to use much exertion.

But bodily suffering was the least evil of which I had to complain. A depression of spirits, which I had always been accustomed occasionally to experience, had lately become much more frequent, and the terrible fiend Ennui constantly haunted me. I described my sensations to my medical attendant, but he being a plain country practitioner, unable to comprehend such refined maladies as those with which I was visited, said it was bile, and sent me a calomel pill, which I flung into the fire.

I tried what reading would do, but found myself wanting in that surest test of mental health, a hunger and a relish for intellectual studies, so was obliged to abandon my books for the present. Should I banish thought by plunging into the vortex of the world?—but this would be acting in the spirit of the fool, who seeks to drown his cares in wine, rather than in that of a philosopher. Should I return to politics?—but this remedy my indolence rejected, on the pretence that I was not in Parliament. Should I hold up my finger to the young ladies and—marry?—but no; first let me try all other remedies and reserve this as a last resource.

"But something must be done," said I—as Honourable Members observe when the state of the nation is perilous and perplexing, and with equal inability to pronounce what that something should be; some change was absolutely necessary, for my present situation had become so distasteful to me, that I could scarcely feel more discontented any where else. What if I were to go abroad?—but it was not the season for travelling on the continent. Tired of proposing plans only to reject them, I endeavoured to reason away my hypochondria, and to take shame to myself for indulging these imaginary evils, when so large a portion of mankind were

afflicted by substantial grievances. But this argument, though undoubtedly sound, I found to be as ineffectual as one from his Majesty's Opposition.

I had no friend, either, in whose conversation and sympathy I might find consolation and solace; for though Palmer stood in a degree of that relation, he was by no means that particular and familiar associate—that other self, which I had often seen described, but had never experienced. There were however, two persons with whom I had thought to have formed this intimate connexion. One was a boy who had been my principal ally at Eton, a youth of the best dispositions and highest promise, and who manifested a strong attachment to me. When I went to town, after my father's death, he was the first person whom I sought out and called upon. I found him at home, and was prepared to greet him with much cordiality—but he had become a dandy, and affected scarcely to know me; then by an effort of recollection, hazarded a belief that we had been at College together. Never thrown off my guard, and possessing the faculty of instantly perceiving the tone and manner of any person with whom I came in contact, and pitching my own to harmonize therewith, if I thought proper, I replaced the cordiality which I had ready, with an air of cavalier indifference, and having talked about the news of the day, bade my *friend* adieu for ever. Another was an individual whose acquaintance I made during my first year in London. He was a most accomplished and agreeable fellow, and paid me so much attention, and seemed so much impressed by me, though his flattery was so delicately administered as to be effectual without being perceived, that I began to feel a considerable degree of complacency toward him. Our acquaintance rapidly proceeded, and we had almost become intimate, when my *friend*, to my extreme disappointment and disgust, asked me to lend him a couple of hundreds. I gave him half his request, and internally resolved to cut him—a resolution, however, which I never put into practice, inasmuch as the opportunity never offered, for though I oftentimes afterward saw my friend at a distance, it so happened that on no occasion did we meet. As to my cool hundred, I heard no more of it.

So much for my adventures in pursuit of friendship, of the existence of which I felt that I had some right to be sceptical. It is true that I was surrounded and courted by many persons, who professed that I was very dear to them, but all these I knew to be friends of that description who can exist only in

the sunshine of prosperity, but whose friendship withers away beneath the frowns of adverse fortune. They always reminded me of poor Anstruther's words, in the bitterness of his spirit, when abandoned and betrayed both by the men who were bound to him by the ties of gratitude, and those upon whom he thought he possessed the purer claims of disinterested esteem and admiration. "Friends are all very true when nothing is required of them beyond friendship; but when you come to rely on them, they bend and totter, and ill-brook supporting you."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

While my mind was yet occupied with these reflections and recollections, my attention was diverted by the sound of carriage-wheels, and concluding that they belonged to some bore of a neighbour, I rang the bell to order myself to be denied, but in doing so, I observed through the window that the equipage and liveries of the new comer were new to me. It was a dark travelling-chaise, with post-horses, a servant in plain clothes, and, as well as I could distinguish, the carriage had but one inmate. In the hope, therefore, that the unrecognized arrival might be some agreeable novelty, I changed my mind, and desired that the visitor might be admitted.

Accordingly, to my surprise and pleasure, the announcement was Mr. Paulet. Of this gentleman, with whom, it will be recollected, I was so particularly impressed, and whose acquaintance I was so very desirous to cultivate, I had seen but little this year, owing partly to my political engagements, and partly to his having married early in the season and left town with his bride, Lady Jane Carmichael, the daughter of the Duke of Knaresborough, with whose family his own was connected, and he had himself been long on terms of intimacy.

He greeted me with much kindness of manner, and expressed regret that he had met me so rarely last winter in town. When I had answered his salutations, and assured him, with perfect sincerity, how much I participated in the regret which he had been so obliging as to express at the infrequency of our intercourse, his reply was no less unexpected than agreeable.

"In town," said he, "owing to many irregular engagements in which most people find themselves involved, one must not hope to see much of one's friends; that pleasure is, in my opinion, reserved for the country; and my principal business in calling here to-day on my way home, is to request that you will spend the Christmas with us, if you are not already otherwise disposed of. I cannot promise you much

gaiety, for we are quiet people; but I expect the Knaresboroughs and the Trefusis next week. These, with my sister, form our party, which it will give me great pleasure if you will join."

This invitation I readily accepted; and indeed I looked upon it as almost providential, that, at a moment when my spirits were well-nigh reduced to the suicidal point, and I really knew not what to do with myself, an opportunity should be offered me of a change, which appeared to me, of all others, perhaps, the most attractive. I felt my curiosity strongly awakened to witness the domestic life of that man, whose bearing and conduct in society I had so much admired; I was exhilarated by the prospect of associating with persons who were free from affectation and frivolity, and were truly refined, rational, and estimable. Lastly, though not in the least degree, my interest was quickened by Mr. Paulet's mention of his *sister*. Could she, as a female, resemble her brother? if so, she must be a very charming person. It was well worth while going, if it were only to satisfy myself on this single point.

Mr. Paulet had been visiting his uncle, the Marquis of Truro, (whose presumptive heir he was,) and was returning to his own place, which was distant about sixty miles from mine. He remained the day with me, and a very agreeable day I passed in his conversation, which formed a striking contrast to that of my uncle, who, though far from dull or ignorant, yet following the bias of his taste, generally talked upon topics which were always devoid of interest to me, and sometimes, as I was in the humour, or as he happened to discuss them with more than ordinary zest, absolutely disgusting.

Before I quitted the neighbourhood, I made a point of seeing the Jacksons; for I thought it due to myself to satisfy them that I was in ignorance of Colonel Sydenham's conduct, until the *éclaircissement* which had ensued upon their discovery of it. I expressed with perfect sincerity, (for which I trust the reader, whatever may be his opinion of my own peccadilloes, will give me full credit,) in the strongest language my abhorrence of his behaviour, which I assured them had occasioned an irreparable breach between us. This explanation was received by both father and daughter with much satisfaction and cordiality. Mutual regrets were exchanged that the delinquency of the principal party had prevented that connexion between the families which had been contemplated,

and hopes that friendly intercourse would nevertheless continue. Miss Jackson, as a woman, (and I admired her spirit,) keenly felt the peculiar insult which had been offered her, and with flushed cheeks and infinite severity, designated her disgraced admirer as a "horrid *old* profligate!" Whether her affections had been much engaged, I cannot pretend to say, but certainly, though considerably flustered, she had succeeded in assuming the air of a person who had merged all private feeling for or against the offender in moral scorn and reprobation of the offence. Touch a woman's pride—arouse that passion, and the probability is—except, perhaps, in very gentle natures—that it will destroy, or at least subdue her love. By a law of Nature it would appear that the fairer part of the creation are instinctively sensible that their only security is in the delicate respect of the stronger sex. No wonder then that any encroachment upon it by us, and any compromise of it by one of themselves, equally call forth their implacable resentment.

CHAPTER XXXV.

It was with unusual elation of spirits, caused by a presentiment that I was about to enter upon better days, and to live among better people, that I seated myself in the carriage which was to convey me to the house of my accomplished friend, as I was fain to call him, although my acquaintance with him scarcely yet warranted that term. Delightful anticipations connected with the scenes which I was about to visit, occupied my mind. The neighbourhood must be excellent, for how could such a man as Paulet live among common-place people? The Priory itself I was prepared to find something quite unique, for how could Mr. Paulet's house be dull or disagreeable? As to the party which I was to join, I was acquainted with them all, and desired not to be a guest among better society. As to Lady Jane Paulet, I knew her very slightly, but I recollected that she was beautiful and gracious, and I doubted not everything else praiseworthy, for could Paulet's wife fall short of perfection? Then Miss Paulet! what was I to expect to find in her? But here imagination busied itself, and I fell into a day-dream, the particulars of which I dare not disclose, for fear of my reader's ridicule.

I started, however, suddenly from my reverie, and laughing at my folly and romance, which were inexcusable in a man of my experience and character, began to reverse the picture, and to entertain anticipations which, I could not but admit, were at least equally rational and probable.

True, thought I, that Mr. Paulet is the most accomplished gentleman I have ever met with, but I can conceive it possible that a person of perfect refinement could be found exceedingly dull company after a short time. True, that his conversation was sensible, but I had not yet discovered in it any traits of wit, humour, or fancy. Perhaps, after all, he was more fitted to adorn society, than to delight a private circle. Lady Jane might be nothing more than a pretty fool; men of sense and taste frequently showed a glaring want of discrimination in their matrimonial alliances. Why should

I invest Miss Paulet with all the virtues and graces of humanity! Why should she not squint, and have red hair? she might be ill-tempered and silly for aught I knew to the contrary. That her brother's sister could be deficient in manner, I could not bring myself to suppose; but why should I, who had neither seen her, nor heard any account of her, fancy that she was not wanting in all other attractions? Great expectations have been disappointed even by great merit; therefore I argued myself into a soberer state of mind, determining that if my most sanguine hopes should be realized—*tant mieux*—if otherwise, there would be no disappointment, as I had not suffered myself to be deceived by visionary representations.

I arrived at my destination by dinner-time. The house was situated on a flat, close to a village, and approached by a road, on each side of which, stately and venerable elms were somewhat formally drawn up. It was an old-fashioned, and not very elegant building, but nevertheless had a most respectable and comfortable aspect. Mr. Paulet was ready to receive and welcome me, and having done so, dismissed me to my apartment to dress for dinner, where I was to meet the rest of the party, who had arrived a day or two previously.

My toilet was scarcely completed, when the dinner bell rang, and desirous to avoid the foppery of coming in late, I urged Pearson to use expedition, a virtue which he was not in the habit of cultivating. However, on this occasion he exerted himself to such purpose, that I reached the eating-room shortly after the rest of the party had sat down. Having paid my compliments to Lady Jane, and bowed to my other acquaintances, my eyes were directed toward the only person present who was a stranger to me, and whom Mr. Paulet immediately named to me as his sister. She was seated on the opposite side of the table, consequently, I had a good view of her. The first glance satisfied me that with respect to exterior there was no deficiency; in fact, she was a very attractive person, not a perfect beauty, but possessing the charm of countenance, in contradistinction to regularly chiseled features. Her hair appeared to want only a shade or two to be decidedly black. The forehead was higher and more ample than is usual in women, and of the purest white. Her eyes, which had much sweetness of expression, were dark grey or hazel, as I believe that colour is called. The mouth, a favourite feature of mine, was not of the pretty, silly, Hebe cast, but rather extensive, the lips full and curving, very fine

toward the corners, which had a slight inclination downward. The face, upon the whole, was a very fine one, and strongly indicating depth of feeling and elevation of mind. Her person was slight and delicate, and as well as I could judge, low rather than otherwise; I guessed also that she had arrived at that time of life when the character is formed, and before which, in my opinion, woman, generally speaking, has not arrived at the zenith of her attractions—I mean about five or six-and-twenty.

These observations, which occupy some space in detail, were, in fact, made before my soup-plate was removed, and while I was conversing with the lively Mrs. Trefusis; the result was a conviction that Miss Paulet must be a very superior person, for I had too much confidence in physiognomy to doubt that such a countenance could belong to a commonplace character.

I was impatient for the termination of dinner, that I might have an opportunity of proving the accuracy of my interpretations. I was not long kept in suspense, for Mr. Paulet proposed an adjournment to the drawing-room, a few minutes after the ladies had retired.

Somewhat to my disappointment, no opportunity occurred to me that evening of any exclusive conversation with Miss Paulet, on account of the smallness of the party and the music, which was very fine, Lady Jane and her sister-in-law being both proficients in that divine accomplishment. Between these charming women, by the way, there seemed to be some difference of character. The former, who was the younger of the two, was of a remarkably lively temperament, said whatever came uppermost, and consequently uttered some strange, whimsical, and even silly things. She was, however, evidently a clever creature, with a taste for the ridiculous, but innocent as a babe, and without a particle of ill-nature. You might see through her in a quarter of an hour. I did certainly; for though I have now known her many years, and loved her as a sister, subsequent experience has only confirmed my first impression, that with all her gaiety and apparent thoughtlessness, she had a good understanding and cultivated mind, and was one of the most gentle and affectionate of human beings.

But Miss Paulet was not so easily fathomed. Her disposition seemed rather serious than mirthful; her remarks were those of a person accustomed to think before speaking, and they were occasionally slightly tinged with satire; never

since I have known her, have I heard a silly thing from her lips. I suspected that her notions of morality were high and refined; that she was a quick detector of faults, and fastidious in her attachments. Unlike her sister-in-law, Miss Paulet did not "wear her heart upon her sleeve;" and to say the truth, I was at first rather doubtful with respect to that most interesting particular. A person less in the habit of acute observation than myself would possibly have discovered none of these traits of character so soon, but I was vigilant and penetrating. Her manners were utterly unaffected, but like those of her brother, naturally of the most superior kind. She talked to me with ease and frankness, but free from that *empressement* which ladies are not unapt to evince, when they are objects of the attention of men of my reputation. To say the truth, although I exerted myself to produce a favourable impression, I did not retire to my chamber on that night with the secure conviction of success, which was wont to be the result of similar undertakings.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

The following day being Christmas, the morning was devoted to the attendance on public worship by all the inmates of the Priory. This was perfectly proper, for I had made it a rule when in the country to appear at church, partly for the sake of example, believing religion to be an excellent thing for the poor, and partly to discountenance the heresy of Lanky, which I held to be both morally odious and politically mischievous. Besides these inducements, I cannot say that I was sensible of being actuated by any purer motive; but, nevertheless, acting as I did, for such reasons, I did not doubt that I had done my duty.

It was natural, therefore, that a man of Mr. Paulet's propriety and good sense should do the like, but I had heard of a proceeding of his which I did not so well understand. It happened in the morning that I had occasion to ring my bell thrice, before my valet attended. When he came into the room, he apologized for the delay, on the ground that he had been at prayers. Though somewhat surprised at this excuse, for though I knew Pearson to be an excellent servant, I never suspected him of being a particularly devout man; I contented myself with desiring that he would, in future, take a more convenient opportunity for the performance of his devotions; upon which, he explained, that he had been attending at the family worship at which Mr. Paulet presided and all his household were present, and that it was the same every morning. Upon this information I made no comment, but I reflected upon it, while Pearson was dressing my hair. Unaccustomed as, I am ashamed to acknowledge, I had hitherto been to think upon religious matters, this practice of Mr. Paulet's appeared to me to savour of a class, of which I had experienced sufficient to fill me with disgust and contempt. Surely, said I, internally, I cannot have got among *serious* people? Can there be anything of cant or coldness, hollowness or hypocrisy, in Mr. Paulet and his connexions? True, he has never in my presence adverted to the subject of religion, but our intercourse has perhaps as yet afforded him

no opportunity, and so it is to come. True, that I know some, neither Methodists nor hypocrites, who practise family worship, but they are mere jog-trot worthy people, with whom I have nothing in common. In short, I found myself relapsing into my old suspicious vein, and consequently descended to breakfast, highly prepared to find fault with Mr. Paulet and his sister, in whose favour I taxed myself with being ridiculously prejudiced.

Upon entering the breakfast-room, I found none of that gravity and reprehension which I had coarsely and illiberally fancied would have marked my reception by the family, on account of having absented myself from the family devotions. On the contrary, I was greeted with much cheerfulness and kindness. The most ingenious malevolence could have detected nothing cold or repulsive in the manner of either Paulet or his sister; and as to Lady Jane, no shadow of ill-humour could rest upon that fair bright brow, which was the abode of gaiety and innocence.

"I hope you are a dancer, Sir Matthew," said she, "for your services will be required to-night at my ball."

"Indeed!" answered I, for this was the first I had heard of a ball; "then, may I hope that I am an early candidate for the honour of that fair hand, which will doubtless have many competitors?"

"I am sorry to tell you," replied Lady Jane, "that that fair hand is already engaged to Mr. Joseph Mogg, who will be my partner in the first and only dance in which I shall join."

"Mogg!" echoed I, involuntarily, in my surprise at the oddity of the name—"a neighbour, I suppose?"

"She's only joking, Sydenham," said the Duke; "there's to be a dinner and ball to the tenantry this evening, and Jane intends to open it with the steward's son."

"I think you had better not, Jane," said Miss Paulet; "he is such a very diffident young man, that I am afraid he will be overwhelmed with confusion by being made so conspicuous——"

"Oh, but that will be the most amusing part of it," interrupted Lady Jane; "he'll say and do a thousand odd things, which will be delightful: now you must not oppose me, Alice, for I've set my heart upon dancing with Joseph Mogg."

"It may be sport to you, my dear," answered Miss Paulet, "but I fear it will be death to him, so pray take my

advice and choose a less nervous partner, for I am sure you are the last person to embarrass and distress a poor young man, who would probably lose all the enjoyment which he anticipated for the evening by the distinction which you propose for him."

"Oh, my dear Alice," cried Lady Jane, her countenance changing from a gay to a serious expression, "I'm so glad you mentioned this, which never struck me before; it certainly might, as you say, annoy him, poor fellow, and throw a damp upon him, which I wouldn't do for the world."

"You are right, Alice," observed the Duke, "the higher class should be very circumspect in their behaviour toward those in an humbler condition, who are not slow to perceive when they are objects of ridicule or contempt to their superiors. Such conduct is cruel, coarse, and impolitic, for it never fails to exasperate as well as mortify. You, my dear child," he proceeded, perceiving that his daughter looked dejected at the severity of his remark—"you meant nothing; and it is because I, like Alice, know that you, of all human beings, are the least likely wilfully to give pain to another, that I point out to you the construction which might be put upon your innocent little project of amusement."

Thus assured, his daughter's ingenuous countenance brightened again, and nothing farther was said upon the subject.

After breakfast, the morning being fine and frosty, the Duke, Mr. Paulet, and I, set out to walk to the church, which was about a mile distant. On our way, we met numbers of the peasantry going in the same direction, all of whom Paulet spoke to, more or less; and it was pleasing to witness his kindness and affability to them, and their respect and cordiality toward him. With some he entered into conversation, and was not deterred from inquiries concerning the health of themselves and families, by occasionally meeting with an honest poser, who went into minute and lengthened particulars upon these points. I admired the patience with which he listened to these tiresome details, and not merely that, but the attention which he paid to them, and which was evidenced by his incidental questions and remarks.

I could not help expressing to him my surprise at his endurance of such a bore, but he answered me that he did not find it one. "On the contrary," said he, "I consider it rather a gratifying compliment, as being a proof that they

believe me sincere in the interest which I profess to feel for them."

"It is better," added the Duke, with that mixture of severity and reflection, "to be a little wearied by the most reasonable of all expectations, than to be disgusted with that more arrogant and despotic sort which is met with in the world."

"And I think," said I, "it is a proof how strong the principle of self is in human nature, that you mostly find ignorant and inexperienced people dividing on every topic controverted with it; and the reason, therefore, why the opinion one meets with in society is so offensive is, that it must be peculiarly strong, when education and knowledge of the world cannot repress it."

To this the Duke assented. As we proceeded toward the church, we occasionally met a few persons going in an opposite direction. These I observed passed us in some confusion, and seemed disposed to slink by unnoticed if possible. Mr. Paulet, however, returned their salutations with his usual courtesy, but spoke to none of them. I asked him if he knew where they were going?

"To a meeting-house," answered he, "which I am anxious to discourage as far as I can, without interfering with conscience."

"The chapel is a nuisance, of which, I am sorry to say, I have considerable experience in my neighbourhood. Have you many Dissenters here?"

"There were a large number during the time of the late vicar, who was unpopular; but they have considerably diminished, and are daily decreasing under the present incumbent, who is a very efficient minister, and in every respect a most estimable, worthy person."

"You are right to discourage Methodism, St. Leger," said the Duke to his son-in-law; "there is a strong alliance between it and knavery, in my opinion; I know their notion to be, that faith supersedes the necessity of practice, and that prayers are sufficient substitutes for good deeds. I once heard a lay preacher of this sect emphatically assure his auditors, that if they were guilty of every crime in the Decalogue, but yet had faith, they would as surely be saved, as the sun would rise on the morrow."

As we entered the churchyard, my attention was drawn toward a lady and gentleman, who had been set down by a carriage at the opposite side, and were walking up the path which led to the church-door. They were an elderly couple;

but what attracted my notice was, the demeanour of the gentleman; his appearance was neither positively vulgar nor otherwise, but he walked through the countrymen who were loitering outside until the commencement of service, with the air of a person who is sensible of being an object of distinction and importance, bowing to them with a mixture of dignity and affability, which struck me as being rather ludicrous. I asked who they were.

"He is Mr. Axford, the brewer," answered the Duke; "a very great man here, I assure you! the lady on his arm is his daughter, Lady Deloraine; they are St. Leger's nearest neighbours."

"Agreeable people?" said I.

"Why—a—I should hardly say that agreeability was their forte; he is a little purse-proud, and rather too fond of show and finery, but in other respects a worthy man, and a good landlord, I believe."

"We are very good friends, but don't see much of each other," said Mr. Paulet: "their wealth enables them to live in a style quite beyond our means; and gaiety, and entertainment is their taste, while we prefer a quiet life."

So saying we entered the church, and as we did so, were perceived by Mr. Axford, who bowed to the Duke and Mr. Paulet as he stepped into his curtained pew, over which his armorial bearings were splendidly emblazoned; we, on the contrary, were shown into one of an humbler description, being neither adorned by heraldry, nor shut out from the rest of the congregation, although sufficiently comfortable and retired for the purposes of devotion.

It may be a fancy of mine, but it has always appeared to me, that in the same manner as a man feels rather disposed to virtue in the country, and to irregularity in town, I was necessarily conscious of a more serious mood of mind in a humble rural church, the only motive to repair to which can be religion, or at least a sense of propriety, than in those splendid edifices in great cities, where people go in course of routine, or as the place of resort upon certain days, or in pursuit of a popular preacher, but I fear a very small proportion, from a sentiment of genuine piety. Any person who has been entangled in a fashionable crowd leaving church must acquiesce in the truth of this remark. The various conversation which he must overhear will sufficiently manifest the spirit of the great majority of the congregation. Compliments mutually passed by the ladies upon each other's dress;

discussions of the gaiety of the past, or anticipations of that of the present week; communications of news; criticisms on the sermon, and the preacher; his grace or his awkwardness; his squeaking, or melodious voice; the plainness, or beauty of his person:—Who is not familiar with all this? I remember, when I was a youth, being at a very celebrated watering-place, at the period of Lent. Lectures were given during this holy season at the most fashionable chapel, by the most celebrated preacher in the place, a man of considerable eloquence and ability. These lectures became the rage, and the chapel was thronged on the mornings that they were delivered. Their principal object was to reprobate the practice which prevailed in this dashing watering-place, of continuing the gaieties during Lent, without any regard to that season of mortification; a practice which he denounced as impious in the extreme, and upon the awful consequences of which he dilated with much power of language. But my inexperience was greatly puzzled to understand, how it could be, that these discourses, though universally listened to and admired, had comparatively no effect. To my surprise, I observed that scarcely one per cent. of those who had praised the lecture of the morning abstained from the ball or party of the evening. I shall never forget a dialogue which I overheard between two old ladies on one of these occasions:—

1st old lady—"What a beautiful lecture!"

2d old lady—"Very indeed, and yet you see, notwithstanding, how they will go on with their routs and balls; I think it shameful and quite wicked; for my part, I make a rule never to go out in Lent, except quite in a quiet way."

1st old lady—"And so do I:—you'll be at Mrs. Perkins's this evening?—*she has only three tables.*"

2d old lady—"Oh, then I'll go; but are you sure there's only to be three tables, for I wouldn't go on any account if I thought it was to be anything like a party?"

But to return;—after the service, having put the ladies into the carriage, we were walking away, Mr. Axford hastened towards us, and spoke to Mr. Paulet with an air full of flourish and importance.

"Mr. Paulet, how do you do, Sir? I wanted to catch Lady Jane coming out of church, to be the bearer of Lady Catherine's apologies for not having yet returned her Ladyship's visit, which she must have thought very odd; but the fact is (do you see?) she has been confined to the house of late with a cold, and besides, in the present precarious state of her father,

Lord Walthamstow's health, she does not appear in public, (do you understand?) so perhaps you will have the goodness to mention this to Lady Jane?"

Mr. Paulet promised that he would make the explanation accordingly, and Mr. Axford then addressed himself to the Duke, with his best bow and smile.

"My dear Duke, I am most happy to see your Grace here; have you been long in these parts? I assure you, if I had known of your Grace's arrival, I should not have suffered a day to elapse before I paid my respects."

His Grace made suitable acknowledgments, and then Mr. Axford looked wistfully at me, as if he would fain be introduced, for possibly I might be a Duke also. Paulet perceived his wish, and named me to him, whereupon I was honoured with some very gracious speeches, in which he assured me that my name was familiar to him, although he had not previously the pleasure of my acquaintance. With this we walked on, and Mr. Axford, still full of himself, informed us that he expected his son-in-law, Lord Deloraine, (the Countess being already with him,) and other grandees whom he named, and when they arrived, he hoped to name a day when he might be honoured with our company. He then stopped a respectable farmer who was passing by, and ostentatiously shook hands with him, saying,

"How do you do, Davis?—ah!—how is your rheumatism? —oh!—better, eh?—ah! I'm glad to hear it:" then turning to us he proceeded, "I always shake hands with such respectable men as Davis; I think one should do it, (do you see?) it gratifies persons of his class to be noticed in such a manner by their superiors, (do you understand?)"

To this remark we assented, and had now reached his carriage, in which was seated waiting for him his daughter the Countess, a pretty woman, to whom he introduced us.

"I don't see your carriage," said he, as he prepared to enter his own.

"We have none," answered Paulet; "we are walking."

"Ah—indeed! you are like me, I suppose; you don't like to employ your servants and cattle on Sundays and holidays; for my own part, I give my people those days as much as possible to themselves, and never will permit anything but a quiet carriage and pair to take the family to and from church."

So saying he wished us good morning, and stepping into his "quiet carriage and pair," it drove off.

"What a fussy, self-important fellow he is!" said the

Duke, whose patience had been somewhat tried; "nothing would cure that man of his vulgarity; but 'what is bred in the bone,' as the proverb says."

"His manner may be a little provoking and tiresome," observed Paulet, "but he is surely a very harmless person, and at the bottom, I believe, a really good man."

"Do you recollect," resumed the Duke, "when Jane told him that he was a great favourite of her's, because he amused her so much, and he made a low bow and a flourishing speech, taking it for a compliment?"

"Yes," answered her husband smiling, "and I was afraid lest she would not be able to keep her countenance, and thus betray that she was making a joke of him; for I knew that she would have been as much pained as I should have been annoyed, at her wounding his feelings."

"True," said the Duke, "it would have made her unhappy for a week."

"A beautiful character!" said I. The father and husband assented to this remark by their looks, but said nothing.

On our return we were invited to see the preparations which were made for the entertainment of the tenantry. The table was spread for between two and three hundred persons, the fare being, of course, substantial, homely, plentiful, and English. After they had dined we adjourned to the dancing-room, where, in their best attire, and with happy bashful faces, the honest rustics received us. The amusements of the evening were opened by Lady Jane and Miss Paulet, Mr. Paulet and myself, who each selected a village partner. After the conclusion of the first dance, Mr. Paulet proposed that we should retire, lest our continued presence should put a restraint upon the hilarity of his guests. This was readily consented to, and after receiving abundant and sincere marks of respect, gratitude, and affection, we withdrew.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Thus passed my first day at the Priory, and my reflection on retiring for the night was, "Certainly these must be the most amiable people I have yet met with. Henceforth with regard to them I will reverse my usual practice, and if I see anything in their conduct which appears to me equivocal, I will put a good construction upon it instead of a suspicious, persuaded that it will be eventually explained to their credit and my satisfaction. And as a good beginning, I will attend at family prayers to-morrow morning." With this meritorious resolution, and in a more complacent mood of mind than I had for some time past experienced, I laid my head on my pillow.

Accordingly, on the following morning, I made my appearance at the dining-room, where every inmate of the house (with the exception of the Duchess of Knaresborough, who, being an invalid, never left her room until the middle of the day,) was assembled. A short and plain prayer was read by Mr. Paulet in an impressive, but unaffected tone, after which the servants retired, and we adjourned to the breakfast-room. At first, although I no longer hesitated to admit the propriety of the practice, I did not enter fully into it, but after a few mornings, such is the force of habit, I suppose, that I did not feel satisfied, if perchance I had omitted to begin the day by joining in the family devotions.

There was little of variety or incident in the mode of life which obtained at the Priory. I remember the time when a description of it would have appeared to me dull and monotonous, as it may now be pronounced, perhaps, by many of my readers, but I know not why I found it to be exceedingly delightful; I only feared lest the charm should be that of novelty, the *ignis fatuus*, which frequently assumes the shape of pleasure and happiness, but at the same time I argued, that as its attractions were the less brilliant, they might probably prove the more durable. Man cannot live in a continual state of excitement, but he may find happiness in an uniformity of sober and rational pursuits.

At the Priory there were no *time-killing* amusements—no ingenious devices, such as the generality of country-houses are furnished withal, to repel the assaults of *the enemy* on *wet days*. They feared him not, and consequently he was entertained by them, not in the character of a formidable foe, but, on the contrary, as a welcome guest, whose stay was only too transient. No person had any business at the Priory who was destitute of internal resources, or deficient in taste for the more refined and abstracted pleasures of reading, conversation, or music. This description, I am aware, may seem very flat, albeit, reader, you are neither a dandy nor a dasher, a mere fox-hunter nor a fool; but let me tell you, if you had any claim to the superior attributes of humanity, it is scarcely possible that you could live a week in such a house as that of which I am speaking without feeling a strong regret at leaving it, and looking forward with delight to the period, when you may hope to return to it again. True, you will say, I must believe this upon the credit of your word; for though I may have attempted to enumerate the attractive and endearing qualities of its inhabitants, how can my feeble pen convey to you a vivid idea of the fascinating society in which I was domesticated? It is easy for me in general language to eulogize their sincerity and good-humour, the cultivation of their minds, and the refinement of their manners; but these features are trite and gross without those traits which impart life to the picture, but are scarcely susceptible of description, and can be successfully attempted only by those who are gifted with the utmost nicety of observation, and the most ethereal delicacy of touch. I make these remarks, lest the reader should observe a ludicrous and mortifying disparity between my praises and their subject, as exhibited in the following pages; for it is possible that my rude efforts may represent only common-place people, while I am extolling such as are exceedingly rare.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

In fact, the Priory was the true Liberty-hall. The society was that of a family, every member of which is free to follow his own pursuits, with only that degree of mutual dependence, which is essential to the harmony of the whole, and which ultimately redounds to the benefit of each individual. If you preferred occupation in your own apartment, you might indulge it without question or interruption; should you be disposed to seek amusement out of doors, there were guns, and dogs, and horses at your command; and during the frost a fine pond, or rather miniature lake, in the grounds, where you might enjoy in perfection the diversion of skaiting, with, perhaps, fair eyes to admire or laugh at your graceful or awkward movements.

Should you feel studiously inclined, you might resort to the library, which contained all works of merit, of every variety, ancient and modern. Or if to all these amusements and occupations, you should have the good taste to prefer the society of the fair, you would find their drawing-room a very agreeable lounge, provided you did not object to occasionally reading aloud, and discussing the merits of the book, while the ladies were engaged with drawing, or some feminine manufactory. For my own part, I did not find this last-mentioned duty by any means irksome, being, as the reader may be aware, rather peculiar in my opinions with regard to the education of women, to whom I do not think it any disadvantage to possess a knowledge of books, and a capability of conversing upon literary subjects. A *bas bleu*—by which I mean a shallow, flippant, conceited woman, who has collected names and words without ideas, and who uses literary slang—is my abomination; but a lady, who, for her own personal improvement or gratification, makes herself acquainted with the best authors, and who does not, in consequence, keep aloof in contempt from the world, or go into it for the purpose of ostentatiously exhibiting her acquisitions, although prepared to vary the trivialities of society with more substantial conversation, when convenient—if such a

[illegible] a blue-stocking. I will venture to say, this abominable designation is applied, can proceed only from one of these three most fertile sources—envy, [illegible] This nonsensical jargon, known by the name of slang-talk, may be well suited to a ball-room and places of such calibre; but rational beings were not born to live in ball-rooms—for women are rational beings, I hope!

But I have already stated my notions upon this subject at length, in a former volume, and will not importune the reader with a repetition of them. I may perhaps be accused of unfairness and want of gallantry in the strictures which I have occasionally made upon the gentler sex, but paradoxical as it may seem to them, I must, in my own justification, say that those severe remarks proceed from a desire to see them assume that station in society to which they are entitled by nature. I have, in fact a high opinion of women. I believe that in love-matters, their own peculiar province, they are generally more pure, more sincere, and less selfish than our sex; and as an experiment, go into any lighted house in the neighbourhood of St. James's in May Fair, and take, indifferently, fifty young gentlemen and as many young ladies, and I think you will find the proportion of fools pretty equal in each.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

The domestic party were all, excepting the Duchess and Mr. Paulet, assembled in the drawing-room one morning, and Colonel Trefusis was reading aloud a new publication of some talent, in which the Aristocrasy was fiercely abused, and described as being utterly depraved both in its moral and political character. This gave rise to a conversation, of which the following is a sketch:—

"What an odious picture!" cried Lady Jane; "but surely it must be exaggerated for the sake of effect?"

"It is very unjust and much exaggerated," answered her father. "The upper ranks, from their situation, being so conspicuous, and possessing the influence they do over every inferior class of society, so much so as to give the tone to the morals and manners of the country, their movements are necessarily a subject of constant interest and comment. Besides the natural disposition of mankind—which, my dear child, I am sorry to say, is much more apt to detect faults than merits—there is a vast number of those not equally favoured by fortune, who, actuated by envy and sinister or selfish views, endeavour to bring the higher orders into contempt. Even of the few whose animadversions are more honest, the majority, I believe, have not the facilities of personal observation, without which, it is, to say the least, as rash and unfair to pronounce an opinion, as it would be for a man to write a book upon France or Russia (a practice which I am told is not uncommon,) who had never crossed the Channel. I have seen hundreds of attacks upon the Aristocrasy, and I think there cannot be a stronger proof of the spirit in which they are penned, than the fact that I do not recollect any of them to have admitted the obvious truth, that if the higher ranks are worse than any other, they are exposed to temptations from which the rest are free."

"I agree with you, Duke," said Colonel Trefusis; "my profession has afforded me opportunities of seeing a great deal of all sorts of society, and my opinion is, that the middle ranks, whose virtuous character is so much extolled, are

not one jot better than their superiors or inferiors, although their vices are of a different kind: the fallacy that they excel in good qualities, I think, originates in their life and conduct being so much removed from the public eye, whereas that of the upper classes is before the world; its every delinquency is known and condemned, but no notice is taken of, and no praise bestowed upon its numerous members, whose lives reflect honour not only upon their own class, but upon human nature itself."

"True," answered the Duke; "I hardly think it is too much to say that the general character of the upper classes is drawn from those examples which are the exceptions to it. At least, I must protest against it as erroneous and unfair to take the notorious characters, male and female who figure in the gay circles of London, as specimens of the higher ranks of society."

"Your friend Mr. Beaumont, for instance," said Mrs. Trefusis, rather wickedly looking at me.

"Ay," rejoined the Duke, "there's a case in point: Mr. Beaumont was not, I believe, at all connected with the aristocrasy by birth, and yet this man was, it appears, much sought after in society, and a conspicuous member of the fashionable circles. How absurd would it be to draw the character of the higher ranks from such a sample as this!"

"That may be all very true," said Mrs. Trefusis, who was a shrewd little woman, with some share of humour and satire; "but I object to an aristocrasy on principle; I dislike it not so much as being vicious in itself, but on account of its being the cause of vice in other classes; I am, for my part, I think, disposed to a pure democracy."

This profession of faith produced a general laugh.

"What do you say, Kate," asked her husband, "to an aristocrasy corrected by periodical decimation? That would be analagous to an ingenious form of government proposed by one of the philosophers of the French Revolution, 'A Monarchy tempered by regicide.'"

"Either of those plans—that of the philosopher or your improvement upon it," returned Mrs. Trefusis, "might be well suited to our mercurial neighbours, but I fear would be too spirited for such a tory, phlegmatic nation as this, which has so much stupid, heavy, good sense, that I despair of ever seeing it get up such an enlivening thing as a revolution."

"Oh, you leveller!" cried Lady Jane; "now I glory in

being an ultra-tory, but I must acknowledge that I hope, for the sake of our public characters, that there will be no revolution in our time, for I fear we should neither of us have magnanimity and patriotism enough to bury our private friendship in political hostility."

"There is not much difference between you on that subject, I believe," said the Duke, smiling; "you are only a republican in theory, I suspect, Mrs. Trefusis, and would be frightened out of your senses if you were to see any prospect of your Utopia being realized at home. And as for you, Jane, under the mask of ultra-toryism, I am afraid you are a true friend of the people; for how else am I to interpret the distribution of food and raiment to the poor, which you have been superintending every day this week? How do you defend yourself from that charge of practical radicalism?"

"I suppose she must explain it after the manner of politicians," answered Mrs. Trefusis, "that it was done in her private character, and not in her political capacity."

"No," replied Lady Jane, "I scorn such a pitiful evasion; but I shall turn King's evidence against Alice, who was an aider and abettor in the act with which I am charged."

"I am afraid," said Miss Paulet, laughing slightly, "that you have implicated me without any benefit to yourself, for I understand the charge to be inconsistency, to which, as I have professed no political opinions, I am not therefore liable; and as for my share of the transaction to which you allude, I shall rest my hope of acquittal on the ground that there can be no more guilt than merit in discharging a duty, which it would be criminal to omit."

"A good defence," said the Duke; "so I believe you must be both acquitted."

"I only wish," added Colonel Trefusis, "that all our Tories were such Radicals, and all our Radicals such Tories."

CHAPTER XL.

One morning, in my rambles, I stopped and paid a visit at the Parsonage-house, the proprietor of which, Mr. Burgess, had dined a day or two previously at the Priory, and of whom, it will be recollected, that Mr. Paulet had made honourable mention.

I found the good man on the little shaven green before his house, romping with two of his children, and exhibiting a benevolent face of enjoyment in their boisterous mirth, which I felt some compunction at checking by my appearance. Disengaging himself with some difficulty from his young ones, who did not without a struggle suffer their playfellow to escape, Mr. Burgess advanced to meet me, whom he addressed with kindness and courtesy, which, though of a homely kind, was on that account perhaps more sincere.

"You find me here, Sir Matthew," said he, after our brief compliments had been exchanged, "like Agesilaus, playing with my brats," and he smiled with me at the disparity of the comparison.

I here, of course, praised his "fine boys," asked their ages, and addressed the urchins themselves, awkwardly enough I dare say, though I hope in a rather more fortunate style than that of an old bachelor of my acquaintance, who, when a young married lady presented her first-born darling to him for his meed of admiration, not knowing exactly what to say to the poor little gummy wretch, tapped it under the chin, with "Aha, little beast!" to the astonishment, disgust, and indignation of the pretty mother. These civilities despatched, and the worthy vicar having satisfied my inquiries in some detail, with respect to the number, and ages, characters, and destinations respectively, of his offspring, dismissed his pair of hopefuls then present to play, and proposed that we should enter the house. I found him to be a man of much benevolence and singleness of heart, but with scarcely any knowledge of the world. His acquaintance with books was rather extensive, but his taste seemed to incline to scholastic literature. He was much addicted to metaphysics, and was sur-

prised when I informed him that the world took very little interest in the doctrines of Descartes and Mallebranche, and the controversies of Berkeley and Reid. His abilities, I should say, were not much above mediocrity, neither was his taste the most accurate. He was, upon the whole, however, an intelligent companion rather than otherwise, and a man with whom one might pass an occasional hour agreeably enough —in the country. He was, no doubt, sufficiently qualified to discharge the important duties of his station, to which pure devotion and sincere industry, are more requisite, than shining talent, or the accomplishments of a man of the world. The only circumstance about him that I envied, was his contentment, which seemed to be supreme. I could not help making the remark with the purpose of eliciting an explanation.

"Why, yes, Sir Matthew," answered he, "thanks be to Providence, I've reason to be contented with my lot; for though He has been pleased to deprive me of a dear wife, I am blessed with four as good children as father can have; and as concerns this world's goods, I'm easy enough; my living is worth nearly five hundred a-year, though you'd hardly think it, perhaps."

"And can you really feel grateful for such a scanty endowment of fortune?" inquired I, with more surprise than politeness, perhaps.

"And why not, my good Sir Matthew?" answered Mr. Burgess; "you with your thousands a-year must not measure my comparatively few and petty wants with your enlarged necessities; I should not know what to do with your income, and you, perhaps, would not know how to live upon mine."

"And so," said I, "you have not a wish ungratified—happy man!"

"Why, as respects myself, Sir Matthew, I have no wish to rise above that humble station in which Providence has been pleased to place me. I have now been in this parish upwards of five-and-twenty years, and I don't think any preferment would tempt me to leave my flock. My only wish is, that I may live to see my poor little ones provided for, and then I should die happy."

"Your eldest son, I think you told me, is just now about to enter upon the study of his intended profession; he is a youth of promise, I presume, by his adopting so arduous a profession as the Bar?"

"I hope so," answered the Vicar, with a complacent smile; "I wish you could see him, Sir Matthew."

"I understand he is a young man of considerable talent?"

"Why, between ourselves, I do think that Tom is intended to be a distinguished character some day or other. A friend of mine, Mr. Mellish, who pays me a visit now and then—a man who has seen a great deal of the world—says that he's extraordinarily clever; quite a wonder; and thinks that he'll turn out a second Erskine. It was he who advised me to send Tom to study the law; to which I objected at first, because I had heard that all lawyers were rogues; but he assured me that this was a nonsensical prejudice, and reminded me of the great Judge Hale, who was as good a man as could be; 'And then,' says he, 'all the most eminent Judges, and Lord Chancellors, and lawyers, have come of a poor and humble class of life;' which, to be sure, was very true, you know."

"You are aware, of course," said I, "that there are considerable expenses attendant on the study of the law?"

"I know there are, Sir Matthew, but I've been saving a small matter from my annual income for years past, with the view of setting my children up in the world when they should come of age to seek their own fortunes. This has now amounted to a pretty little sum, which I intend shall pay for Tom's expenses—much more than his share certainly, but I consider it money well invested, for he'll provide for his brothers and sister when he's flourishing in his profession, which I look forward to be about the time when they'll want assistance, poor things!"

"Well, I heartily wish that your hopes may be realized," said I; "but you know, Mr. Burgess, that human projects are liable to a thousand unforeseen accidents; should any of these disappoint your views—"

"I must hope for the best, my dear Sir, as I think I have every reason," interrupted the Vicar, who grew pale for an instant at the possibility which I suggested; "I humbly put my trust in God to prosper my honest endeavours; should anything of the kind you allude to occur, I know not indeed what would become of my other poor children: but I look at the bright side."

Here he rose from his seat, and opening a bureau at the end of the room, took from thence two school copy-books.

"Those are my boy's themes," said he, handing me one of the books, "written at school when he was in his sixteenth year"

This is tiresome, thought I, but there is no avoiding it without hurting the good man's feelings; so I received the book with a good grace, and having glanced my eye over the pages, which contained much the same sort of composition which is usually found in school exercises, I complimented the promising talent which it manifested, and laid it down; whereupon its companion, the other paper book, was thrust into my hand with this comment, "There, Sir Matthew, is a poem which Tom wrote when he was *scarcely fifteen!*"

"Indeed!" said I; "singular precocity! Your son, Mr. Burgess," I proceeded, rising from my chair and taking my hat, "Your son is evidently a young man of the highest promise, and I heartily wish him all the success which he deserves—Good morn—"

"Stay a moment," interrupted the Vicar hastily; "I see the lad in the garden; I'll call him in, and you shall judge for yourself;" and before I could prevent the renewed series of the same bore which this proceeding threatened, Burgess had thrown up the window and bellowed out, "Tom, Tom, I want to speak to you!"

Tom, alas, soon made his appearance, and was introduced to me in due form by his admiring father. He was an ungainly youth of twenty, or thereabout, with a pert and vulgar, but rather clever face, in which I detected a disagreeable expression of cunning and knavery.

"You are about to enter upon a very arduous profession, Sir, I understand," said I to the young man.

"Yes, Sir Matthew," answered he, smartly, "arduous for blockheads, but not for others."

As his son spoke, the Vicar looked in my face to read there my first impression of the hopeful. Had I not been aware of the scrutiny to which my countenance was subjected, I should not have suppressed some disgust at the flippancy and forwardness of the stripling.

If I was bored and annoyed myself by the hopeful's conversation, it is a very good reason why I should not trouble the reader with a repetition of it. It is sufficient to say, that for a full half hour, which the happy father took to *show* his son (no difficult task, for the monkey was willing enough to exhibit himself,) he displayed his talents and acquirements in various forms, such as morals, politics, and literature, to their full extent, I suppose. When the exhibition was over, Burgess used some pretext to send his son out of the room,

obviously for the purpose of asking my opinion, and feasting himself with my applause; a certain portion of which I thought myself obliged to yield, although I felt some misgivings as to whether I was doing right in nourishing the delusion under which the worthy but simple-minded Vicar laboured—a delusion, the prosecution of which might be followed by lamentable consequences. This weakness argued nothing against his general good sense, for wiser men than this country curate have suffered under similar hallucinations —Lord Chesterfield and Burke for examples. The notion that 'Tom' was a great genius was indeed his only *twist*, for in other respects he was a man of sober and sound judgment.

"Yes," said he, with an exquisite smile of complacency, after I had performed my *duty-praise*, "I do not think there are a *great many* such young men as Thomas Burgess."

Having acquiesced in this remark, I again seized my hat and made good my escape, without farther let or hinderance.

CHAPTER XLI.

One morning, seeing Mr. Paulet's horse at the door, and himself preparing to mount, I requested that he would wait a few minutes while my own nag was getting ready, in order that I might have the pleasure of riding with him.

"I should be happy to have your company, Sydenham," answered he, "but I am just now going to visit a friend who is rather peculiarly situated, and I am not sure whether the presence of a second person might be quite agreeable to him. But possibly you are acquainted with the gentleman I am speaking of—Mr. Cheselden?"

"Cheselden? is that the man who ran away with Mrs. Crawford the year before last?"

"The same."

"I recollect to have been introduced to him shortly before the elopement took place. A very accomplished man, I remember—is he in this neighbourhood?"

"He is staying at B——," answered Mr. Paulet, mentioning a small watering-place, between two and three miles from the Priory, "where he has been ordered for his health, which is in a wretched state; though, I believe, the body is affected through the disease of the mind, in his case, poor fellow!"

"I should like much to accompany you," answered I, "but certainly I would not do so if you think there would be any risk of annoying him; he was one of the very few of my London acquaintances whose society I wished to cultivate."

"Well, then," said Paulet, "as you know him, come; he will perhaps be flattered rather than otherwise."

Accordingly I ordered my horse, and we set off unattended, for Mr. Paulet observed, "Should we find our friend, as I fear is not unlikely, living in a very plain way, although he knows that will make no difference to us, he might be annoyed by servants, who judge always from externals, and are apt to make coarse remarks."

Such was the delicacy of this amiable man's mind, and his consideration for the feelings of others.

"I suppose," said I, "that his folly has brought him into embarrassment?"

"You may well call it folly," answered Paulet, "for there was more of folly than of vice in poor Cheselden's conduct, I believe; and I suspect he is reaping the fruits of it now."

"He married Mrs. Crawford after the divorce, did he not?"

"Yes, immediately, and paid every shilling of the damages, heavy as they were, and limited as were his means, without delay. It seems singular to call a man unfortunate who has brought misery upon himself by a breach of morality; but nevertheless I do consider Cheselden one of the most unfortunate of mankind. You are probably acquainted with his history?"

"I know nothing of it, except that unlucky passage of it which is notorious."

"Cheselden," proceeded Mr. Paulet, "is one of my earliest friends; we were at Eton together, and subsequently at Oxford. Fortune has not favoured him with her commonest gifts, but endowed him with those rarer qualities which enable the possessor to acquire the others if he pleases. His talents were indeed of the highest order, and had he possessed resolution to persevere in cultivating them, and firmness to withstand the temptations to which they exposed him, he might have been almost already anything he liked."

"He was more allured by pleasure than influenced by ambition, I suppose?" said I.

"By no means: Cheselden was full of ambition—enthusiastic ambition—but unhappily he was diverted from the pursuit of it, by a taste for dissipation which he contracted at College, and into which he was led by his social talents, which were the most brilliant and delightful that I ever experienced. This course of life led him into extravagance and embarrassments, and I took occasion of his being relieved from them, after much anxiety, to use the freedom of our friendship, to exhort him to cease from squandering his time and talents upon such unprofitable pursuits, and to devote them to higher and more legitimate objects. He assured me that he was disgusted with dissipation, and that he would thenceforth rigidly follow the path of distinction. I flattered myself that he would have persevered in his resolution, and that ambition had regained that powerful sway over his mind, which I knew it naturally possessed, although suspended by the usurpation of pleasure, for he steadfastly resisted all at-

tempts to seduce him into his old habits while he remained at College. When he quitted the University I lost sight of him, for he went to London to commence the study of his profession, the law, and I, about the same time, left England for the Continent.

"On my return to this country the following year, one of my first inquiries was about Cheselden. I found him in the gayest society of London, admired and courted for his accomplishments and attractive qualities. He met me with consciousness and confusion, which he endeavoured to conceal by an air of indifference. Finding him in this state of mind, I abstained from any comment on the life which he was leading, so incompatible with his views and promises; but I cannot tell you, Sydenham, how much I was disappointed and grieved at the sight of those rare elements of a great character thus going to ruin from abuse.

"My intercourse with Cheselden was thenceforward much diminished, in consequence chiefly of his continual engagements in gay circles, which I seldom frequented. When we met, however, there was great cordiality and kindness on his part; but he seemed purposely to avoid affording me any opportunity of alluding to his manner of life; and, at length, I gave up all hope of seeing him return to his profession, and those prospects realized, which he and his friends had in view.

"The catastrophe of his career, the affair of Mrs. Crawford, took place while I was abroad. She, I understand, is a romantic person—*un tête exalté*—and became captivated with his conversation; and Cheselden, his moral principle and firmness of character utterly relaxed, I suppose, by his habits of life, yielded to the seduction. He had once the purest, as well as the noblest sentiments; and even in the midst of dishonour, he evinced some remnant of them, for he would not consent to carry on the intrigue while Mrs. Crawford remained under her husband's roof, and always avoided cultivating Mr. Crawford's society.

"I have not seen him since this disastrous *éclaircissement*; and it was only this morning that I heard by a letter from a mutual friend, that he had been sent to B—— for his health, which was in a declining state, owing to mental vexation and anxiety."

CHAPTER XLII.

As Mr. Paulet concluded this little memoir, we arrived at B——, which was a small water-drinking place, as yet not much celebrated. We soon discovered the house we sought, which was one of the humblest in a place, of course, not remarkable for the splendour of its accommodations. Dismounting, and leaving our horses with a couple of blackguard boys, we passed through a little gate, up six yards of garden engrossed by noble sun-flowers and tall poppies, to the house-door, our application to the bell of which was, in the course of time, opened by a dirty girl, who answered our inquiries, that Mr. Cheselden did live there, and upon our proceeding to ask whether he was at home, said she would go and see, and banged the door in our faces. After considerable delay, the slut returned, and reported that Mr. Cheselden was out, but with such a manner as afforded us strong reason to believe that this was a denial. We left our names, and turned away, but had scarcely reached the gate at the extremity of the garden aforesaid, when we heard the servant wench bawling after us "Please to come back!" a summons which we immediately obeyed, and in doing so encountered Mr. Cheselden, who had hurried out to meet us, on hearing the names. At first, the greetings of the friends were silent but warm, and after an additional pressure of Cheselden's hand by Paulet, for the sake of his recent misfortunes, which the other understood, and acknowledged by returning the pressure with gratitude and affection, while his feelings seemed almost overpowered, he said with a faltering voice,

"My kind, my valued friend, this is more than I could have expected, numerous as are the proofs which I have had of your forbearance and disinterested friendship."

"No more of that," answered Paulet, who showed on this occasion more tenderness than I thought belonged to his calm, and, as I therefore inferred, rather unimpassioned nature—"Cheselden, you know Sydenham," he proceeded, reminding his friend of my presence, which he had not as yet recognized, but immediately upon this suggestion, turned to

me, and apologizing addressed me with a beauty of manner which I have rarely seen equalled; which was not the less graceful for being somewhat of an effeminate character.

Having paid these compliments, he invited us into the house, and not without a blush of annoyance, cut short the explanations of the servant-girl, who was endeavouring to clear her veracity from the suspicion cast upon it by the appearance of Mr. Cheselden, after she had denied his being at home.

"Are you alone?" asked Paulet in a half whisper, as we were about to enter.

"Mrs. Cheselden is with me," answered his friend in the same tone, "but you will not see her, she is confined to her room to-day by indisposition."

So saying, he conducted us into an apartment, which proved too plainly that the occupier's circumstances must have been of the most limited description. It was a small close parlour in the shape of a box, and in the diminutive grate was a blank fire, or one which by fitful, hectic sparks indicated its rapidly approaching extinction—the very emblem of poverty and discomfort at that season of the year. A handsome Indian shawl, and a piece of faded finery in the shape of a bonnet, lay on the shabby sofa; a pair of slippers were visible on one side of the fire-place, and a pair of pantaloons ornamented a chair, in one corner of the room. Although he affected to take no notice of these things, it was easy to perceive that Cheselden was painfully sensible of the humility of his lodging.

"You see," said he, with a constrained laugh, as we entered the room, "I am not very magnificently lodged."

"The accommodation here," answered Paulet, "is as yet very deficient, but it will improve as the place becomes more frequented, and it is making advances every season. The waters are said to have great virtue, and have been very beneficial in many cases. I suppose you are ordered to use them, Cheselden?"

"I am so," replied the invalid; "but," he added, with a melancholy smile, "I fear that my malady does not come within the province of medicine. However, we will not talk of grievances now, but let me congratulate you, my dear friend, upon the late happy change that has taken place in your condition; you have married, I understand, a most charming lady."

Paulet made his acknowledgments: "I know," said he,

[illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [

CHAPTER XLIII.

WITHIN a few miles of the Priory was a celebrated monastic ruin, which as neither the Trefusis' nor I had seen, it was proposed that we should all visit it on the first fine day. Accordingly we took the earliest opportunity for carrying this intention into execution, as the Trefusis' were to take their departure soon. The Duke and Duchess were not of the party. The season of the year was not favourable to the scene, which was to be viewed to the greatest advantage when surrounded by all the attractions of Nature; but, as Miss Paulet (who, attended by her brother and myself, rode, the others being in carriages,) observed, "There were two ways of viewing an old ruin; it might be looked upon only as a picturesque object, for which view it should be visited in summer; but for those who regarded it as a relic of past ages, as the abode of ancient bigotry, tyranny, or chivalry, recalling to the mind images of manners of which no vestige remains, and of legends hallowed by time, its interest was independent of outward circumstances."

"True," said her brother, "that is the distinction. Now I suspect the ruin strikes Jane in the picturesque point of view; but that you, Alice, are more impressed with the romance and the associations connected with it, although perhaps equally capable of enjoying the other, but in subserviency to the more contemplative aspect of the place."

"I am rather inclined to agree with Miss Paulet's view of the subject," said I; "unfortunately, however, I find that I can seldom indulge such reveries, the illusion being constantly broken by the sort of people who haunt such places."

"That is an annoyance I have often suffered from," said Miss Paulet, "so I can sympathize with you. That is why I never go to the ruin in summer, for the mirth and absurd remarks of the visitors and the automaton guide put an end to all sentiment."

We were so fortunate as to be free from both nuisances on this occasion, for there was no "company" at the ruin; and the showman, knowing that his services were not required in

[illegible] with his boys, and [illegible] upon as a single piece of [illegible] would seem he was incapa- [illegible] answer to some part of it: [illegible] being, as I afterwards [illegible] Lady [illegible] unimpeachably perfect in all [illegible] through it: from be- [illegible] in [illegible] answer detached [illegible]

[illegible] and myself were loitering [illegible] and in town, and wondering [illegible] we [illegible] might visit the [illegible] cathedrals, could feel [illegible] I [illegible] will regret to us, as we were [illegible] looking [illegible] the inhabitants of the [illegible] through [illegible] one of which we [illegible]

"[illegible] to dwell upon the [illegible] observed our [illegible]

"Yes," [illegible] overheard [illegible] to take [illegible] impressively pointed [illegible] the [illegible] prospect of the [illegible] we joined [illegible] which one would [illegible]

"I [illegible] of [illegible]," said [illegible] "because [illegible] I have [illegible]

"Oh, I know it well!" cried Lady Jane. "Charlotte [illegible]"

"I mean in particular person," interrupted Miss Pardet; "several [illegible]"

"I can [illegible] Alice, like her whom you won't allow me to name," answered Lady Jane.

"Be [illegible] dear," resumed Miss Pardet, [illegible] "I don't pretend to judge of it, for it is very [illegible] to treat with such contempt opinions opposite to [illegible] upon a matter which is, after all, perhaps, one of [illegible]"

"Undoubtedly it is," rejoined her incorrigible sister-in-law,

"according to the aforesaid Charlotte's mode of viewing it; who, when we exclaimed against the profanation of the chapel, wondered at our objection as much as we did at her admiration, for she could not understand how it was possible to prefer grass and weeds to beautiful and fragrant flower-beds."

"Still," pursued Miss Paulet, "that is no impeachment of the wisdom or general taste of the aforesaid Charlotte, as you choose to call her; for Dr. Johnson, you know, used to be surprised at any one preferring such an object as a picturesque landscape to the sight of a London street; and I think I recollect that another great writer* never could perceive any merit in Shakspeare."

I thought I perceived a slight touch of irony in this defence of Charlotte Blank, but perhaps I was mistaken; I had, in fact, soon discovered that Miss Paulet was a quick and nice discriminator of faults and follies, by observations which occasionally escaped her; though I never heard her utter an ill-natured thing of any person, and whenever she indulged in satire or ridicule, as she sometimes did slightly, it was always general. Nothing else passed worthy of note during our visit to the ruin.

* This is not exactly correct, for Miss Paulet probably alluded to Addison, who is said to have been unacquainted with Shakspeare.

CHAPTER XLIV.

Among the many amiable traits exhibited by the charming family in which I was domesticated, one of the most pleasing, was the affectionate relation which subsisted between the wife and sister of Mr. Paulet; which was the more remarkable, as this sort of connection is frequently, if not generally found to be one of jealousy and discomfort. But envy and meanness, as well as every other illiberal sentiment, were strangers to the single-minded Lady Jane and the noble Alice Paulet. Her brother, indeed, I am convinced, would never have married any person who he was not sure would make his home agreeable to his orphan sister.

The manner in which they spoke of each other was delightful. Miss Paulet mentioned her sister-in-law in the warmest terms, describing her as one of the most affectionate, sincere, and artless of human beings. "I think," said she, "you can hardly be an hour in her company without perceiving these qualities; but you must have more than a common acquaintance with her before you can know how deeply seated they are. I can myself, from personal experience, bear testimony that her heart is made up of kindness, generosity, and feeling. As to St. Leger, she adores him, and, I believe, fancies him quite a superior being. Notwithstanding her thoughtless frankness, for she says whatever occurs to her, you may see that she is clever, and for those who think that she requires a little steadiness, time will satisfy them; for my own part, I would not have her at present any other than she is."

Lady Jane's praise of her sister was, if possible, still more ardent. The eagerness with which she seized an opportunity which seemed to offer itself once, when we happened to be left together, of eulogizing the perfections of her "dearest Alice," was delightful. This struck me, also, as a remarkable proof of her unsophistication, for a woman of more knowledge of the world would have feared to praise a young unmarried sister in such terms to "a desirable," lest her motives should be suspected; and suspected they most assuredly would have been by me, had thay been uttered by

any other lady in a similar situation; but oil and water could sooner commingle, than artifice and Lady Jane Paulet.

Miss Paulet, as has been mentioned, was an orphan; her father, who was a distinguished officer, fell in action during her infancy; and her mother, who was devotedly attached to him, existed, rather than lived, twelve years after him, when she died of a disorder brought on by slow but consuming grief. Although at a very early age when Lady Edward Paulet died, she was old enough to discern and love the amiability of her character, and cherished the tenderest affection for her memory. These particulars I learned from Miss Paulet herself, as our acquaintance improved, which it did rapidly, as we happened to be thrown very much into each other's society, especially after the departure of the Trefusis'. We walked and talked together, and though she sometimes smiled dissentingly from, or gently remonstrated with, the peculiarity and severity of my opinions, our tastes were, upon the whole, very much alike. I found her to possess a considerable knowledge of books and of mankind, and a sound judgment upon both; so that our conversation, as we grew intimate, was rarely of the light and frivolous quality, but of a rational and interesting description.

She would readily play and sing for me when I asked her, without any affectation, and evidently from a wish to do what was agreeable to me. I would repay this condescension by reading to her, or instructing her, by desire, upon matters of history, politics, or general literature, from my own more masculine knowledge. When tired of these indoor occupations, she would assent to my proposal to ride or walk; and in this way we sometimes passed a whole morning together: I need hardly say, most agreeably, as far as I was concerned. All this was very dangerous, the reader will say, to both parties; but for myself, I had frequently, to amuse myself for the time being, carried on the same sort of thing, and having always escaped without a wound, had become like a veteran warrior, indifferent to danger. As for the other party, I am ashamed to confess, I was so selfish and cruel, as to care little whether she escaped with equal impunity. With respect to Miss Paulet, however, I must do myself and her the justice to say, that great as my self-sufficiency might be, I never presumed to regard that accomplished young lady as a person to be lightly affected, or carelessly practised upon.

CHAPTER XLV.

Many days did not elapse before Mr. Paulet and I renewed our visit to Cheselden. We found him sitting with his wife, whom Paulet greeted with much kindness; for though he had a distaste for women of her description, it was not in his nature to wound the feelings of any person, and he knew that his friend would be gratified by his showing attention to his unfortunate partner. I had known her a little in town before the elopement, but when she was a good deal talked of with Cheselden: so that I only renewed my acquaintance. She received us with much embarrassment, and for a few seconds could not speak, the tears being in her eyes. Of this, Paulet took no notice, but allowed her to recover herself, and then entered into easy conversation. The emotion consequently soon disappeared, and her manner appeared to be released from the restraint arising from a never-ceasing consciousness of her situation. She was a pretty woman, but dressed with much singularity and affectation. She had the character of being sentimental, and was a good deal ridiculed in town for the eccentricities which she practised, in accordance with that character. She was by no means absolutely silly, but had only wit enough to be a more remarkable and mischievous fool.

It is not always that you can discover, from the behaviour of married people to each other in public, whether their union is harmonious or ill-assorted; but it was easy to see that Mr. and Mrs. Cheselden were an unhappy couple. Her manner toward him was querulous and peevish, expressive of a constantly vigilant suspicion of his attachment, because it was not evidenced by a devoted and cheerful submission to all her caprices. Such a woman might possibly not be deficient in affection; but who would care to possess it on such disagreeable terms? This seemed to be Cheselden's sentiment; for though he offered no opposition to his wife's whims, he yielded to them with an air of patient resignation, which proved, indeed, that he was acting from principle, already released from the government of passion. Had she

been a woman of any tact or right feeling, conscious, as she must have been, that she was, if not the sole origin, at least the proximate cause of the ruin of her husband's fortunes, would not all her efforts have been used to avert the disgust, of which she must dread eventually becoming the object to him, when passion should have subsided and given way to reflection? What man, with any generosity, or even common humanity, would not appreciate such conduct? Great as his sacrifice might have been—nay, though remorse and disappointed ambition should be preying upon his vitals, and love itself be waxing faint—he never would be forgetful of the sacrifice which she also had made for him, nor turn a cold killing look upon her, who, for his sake, had exchanged the admiration of the world for scorn, and whose life and happiness were now centred in the light of his countenance!

"Cheselden's situation must be truly wretched," observed I, as we rode homeward after our visit: "poverty, blighted hopes, and domestic uneasiness, is a pretty good share for one man."

"We have indeed to-day," answered Paulet, "seen vice and folly shorn of the lacker of romance and sentiment. Poor Cheselden, however, will not suffer long; he is evidently sinking under the weight of his misfortunes and disappointments."

"To sacrifice one's prospects and character," said I, "for the sake of a woman who afterwards turns out to be unworthy of one's regard, without which love can have no permanent foundation, must, I should think, be exquisite misery. How could Cheselden be so infatuated? She has absolutely nothing but beauty and grace to recommend her; quite devoid of mind, and, I suspect, without a great deal of heart."

"Cheselden's infatuation," rejoined Mr. Paulet, "is perhaps easily accounted for by the well-known fact that men of superior talents, who have generally ardent imaginations, are much more easily deceived by women than those of a more ordinary character. Their fancy invests the object of their admiration with qualities which she does not possess, and they identify the celestial phantom of which they are enamoured, with the frail mortal who is the ostensible object of their love. For my own part, I think the smallest reflection must prove to a man the fallacy of expecting domestic happiness with a woman who has lost her essential quality, in my opinion, not less important as a grace than as a virtue—purity of mind."

CHAPTER XLVI.

The morning the Thorn was enlivened by a visitor, who was received with much kindness and even warmth, by the female members of the Peake family, who alone were at home at the time, and with whom I happened to be sitting. This favourite person was Captain Axford, the eldest son of the gentleman who has already figured for a short time in these pages. The young man, however, was as unlike his father as he could well be, for he appeared to be a remarkably well-bred and gentlemanly person, which was not to be wondered at, for though he might have derived brewer's blood from the paternal line, yet he certainly was by his mother very highly connected. Besides, he had been bred in that best of all schools for gentlemen, the army. However, be this as it may, he was received with much cordiality by both ladies, and I thought with *peculiar* kindness by Miss Paulet; undoubtedly I observed a degree of *empressement* in his manner when addressing her. This remark made me scrutinize him with a little more attention, and I could not but admit that his person was eminently handsome, and his manners very graceful. His conversation, likewise, was lively and agreeable. I confess that these points did not prepossess me in his favour, for I felt, like Sir Lucius O'Trigger, "that there was a probability of succeeding about the fellow which was mighty provoking." But what was that to me! and why should I feel a prejudice against him on that account! Absurd.

"I only arrived last night at my father's," said Captain Axford, "and you may easily believe that this is the first house I have called at."

"And I hope," answered Lady Jane, "that you are come to make a long stay in this neighbourhood!"

"I have obtained three months' leave of absence," replied he, "which I intend to spend here."

"The devil you do!" thought I, with an involuntary feeling of disappointment, which, however, I immediately checked

by again internally asking myself the unanswerable question, "What concern is that of mine?"

"Oh, I'm delighted to hear you say so," said Lady Jane; "you'll stay and dine with us to-day?" The young man accepted the invitation with alacrity.

It was curious that Miss Paulet did not concur in expressing anxiety to be informed how long Captain Axford's stay was to be, nor gratification in learning that it was to be so protracted. I should have been better pleased if she had. Her silence was suspicious. Perhaps—and my dark and indefinite notions began to assume a palpable form, which I encountered as before with the self-interrogatory—"And suppose it to be so, what the devil do I care?"

Mr. Paulet subsequently greeted the new comer with as much cordiality as had been previously displayed by his wife and sister. At dinner the favoured guest sat next to Miss Paulet, and I, being on the opposite side of the table, could not help observing them. There was certainly a slight constraint and confusion in his manner when he addressed her, and she manifested some embarrassment toward him.

"George Axford is looking very thin," remarked Lady Jane, after this personage had taken his leave; "don't you think so, Alice?"

"I don't know but he is rather thinner than usual," answered Miss Paulet somewhat evasively.

"He is a very pleasing young man," said Mr. Paulet; "I'm glad to hear he is to remain some time at his father's."

"A very fine young man, Captain Axford," said I, (the words almost stuck in my throat,) a few minutes afterward, as we were turning over the music at the piano forte.

"Yes, he is—have you ever heard this Spanish air?"

"You and he are old friends?"

"Who? Captain Axford? Oh yes."

"I should like to hear the Spanish air—will you play it?"

The Spanish air was, I suppose, played accordingly, but it was lost upon me. I know not why, but I was thoughtful during the remainder of the evening, and sleepless a great part of the night.

CHAPTER XLVII.

In pursuance, no doubt, of his own inclinations, as well as the express desire of Mr. and Lady Jane Paulet, and the implied wish of their sister, Captain Axford became a frequent visitor at the Priory. I was sensible of a growing dislike and contempt for this young man. His manners were soft and amiable; his conversation light and graceful, but he seemed to have no great share of sense. "I like George Axford," said Lady Jane, "because he is such a complete lady's man; so well-looking, well-dressed, and well-spoken; so proud and pleased to be made use of; his only ambition being, to wear the livery of the fair sex."

But could a person of this description please Alice Paulet? The question, I did not deny, was one in which I took some interest, for I and Miss Paulet were confessedly considerable friends, and surely there was nothing extraordinary in feeling some interest in the disposal of one's friend, in the most important relation in life? Could she then, the high-minded, accomplished, and fastidious girl, in whose presence I found it necessary carefully to dispose myself to the best advantage, in order to avoid falling into her contempt—could Alice Paulet be captivated by a mere "nice young man?" (to use the ladies' phrase.) If this were a matter of reason, the answer would be decisive; but all experience proves that love scorns the dictates of that sober counsellor, and therefore, perhaps, the probability was, that Axford had a better chance of the rich prize than a man who approached nearer to her own elevation of character. It was only from strict observation, then, that I could hope to derive any knowledge of her sentiments toward him, unless indeed chance disclosed the secret. That there was a peculiarity in their mutual behaviour, was evident. His manner toward her was characterized by timidity, emotion, and deep respect; in her's there was, as I have before said, an uniform kindness, almost approaching to tenderness. What was the inference? Sometimes I perversely tortured every argument and evidence to confirm myself in the belief that they were lovers: at others, I persuaded myself with equal pertinacity, that all the suspi-

cious circumstances in their conduct admitted of explanation, and that no attachment existed; and it is curious enough, that accordingly as I was under the influence of either of these opinions, was my manner toward Miss Paulet affected. If under the former impression, I treated her with coldness and almost slight, from resentment, which, however unwarrantable on my part, I could not help feeling, that she should fix her affections on an object so contemptible. Again, if I had taken it into my head that there was nothing serious between her and Axford, my attentions to her were redoubled.

These caprices of mine passed neither unnoticed nor unfelt by Miss Paulet, who showed some slight surprise and disappointment thereat; indications which were gratifying to me, although they made me ashamed of myself, and apprehensive lest her good opinion of me should be lost, which I was anxious to keep up. The cordiality of her manner toward me, however, was undiminished; nay, our friendship seemed to be daily increasing. She now frequently turned the conversation, when we were together, upon myself, my plans, and my prospects in public life, which she flattered me by seeming to wish that I should not abandon, This was the most touching proof of her regard that I had yet received. She listened with interest to the details of my political adventures; and her brightening eyes, and earnest countenance, showed how much she entered into the spirit of my narrative, which I gave perhaps with some animation. At those parts of it, however, which exposed the heartlessness, hypocrisy, dishonesty, and meanness of political intrigues, she would look grave, and ask,—

"And did you take a part in such proceedings?"

"As belonging to a party," answered I, not without embarrassment, "it was necessary that I should acquiesce in them, although they did not meet my entire approval."

"Then why belong to a party, if by doing so, you are obliged to compromise truth and integrity."

"It is impossible, my dear Miss Paulet, to be of any importance in public life in this country, unless in connexion with party. No doubt that the elements, of which party is sometimes composed, are not of the purest kind, nor are the means which it employs always justifiable in strict point of morality, but the end is perhaps good, and the action of party generally salutary; but the very essence of it being union, individuals must sometimes yield their own private opinions."

"I speak to be instructed," said Miss Paulet, "and per,

haps, in my ignorance, say foolish things; but I cannot understand, how that which is morally wrong can be politically right."

"It certainly does involve an absurdity," answered I; "but these matters are very difficult of explanation."

There was a pause of some length, during which Miss Paulet looked grave and thoughtful.

"I am afraid," said I, "that you are displeased at what I have told you."

"No," answered she, laughing slightly, "only a little disappointed; I had admired you as a patriot, but I find that you are only a politician."

"You must not be too hard upon me," I replied, "but rather charitably attribute anything which you see objectionable in my public conduct to the system upon which I acted, than to myself personally. You must do me the justice also to recollect, that I separated from my party as soon as I discovered that their proceedings were dishonourable, duplicious, and mischievous."

"I am not unmindful of it," answered she, "and it does you honour. But, oh, Sir Matthew, how noble such conduct would be if it were founded on uncompromising principle! how glorious for a man of station and talents to stand forward as the apostle of a new system, the essence of which should be integrity, renouncing intrigue and the slightest deviation from its own straightforward course upon any pretence whatsoever! Surely such a character, by perseverance, must eventually be admired and venerated; his opinions would be always listened to with respect, because known to be sincere, and, if he possessed wisdom, I can conceive that they would be regarded as the oracles of truth. What pride would such a man feel, if his success and example founded a party of such Statesmen! And even should he fail in his righteous endeavours, he could retire from public life with the consciousness of having made a noble attempt."

I have given the reader her words, but how can I afford him an adequate idea of her earnestness, the heroic animation, the divine expression with which they were uttered! I never before saw her look so beautiful, and so superior; and as I gazed upon, and listened to her, I felt an impulse to adopt her romantic, but high-minded suggestion. The idea that this glowing description was peculiarly meant as a hint to me, I found also to be inexpressibly pleasing. Surely, thought I, such a creature as this cannot have given her heart to so very common-place a person as George Axford.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

On the day following this conversation, all the party at the Priory, including myself, were engaged to dine at Mr. Axford's. A large party was, I believe, made for us, and there was to be a dance in the evening. On our arrival, accordingly, we found all the *élite* of the neighbourhood, and Mr. Axford, who was in his glory, surrounded by all these fine people, was, as might be expected, unusually bustling, and full of importance. When we entered the room, Mr. Axford—for he did all the honours himself, almost entirely superseding in that capacity his wife Lady Susan, who was a quiet little woman, apparently half ashamed of her husband—after expressing with much flourish his happiness and his pleasure at seeing us, began to pour forth many lamentations that he had been disappointed in one illustrious guest, who had promised to honour him with his company on that day, as he passed through the neighbourhood on his way to town, but most unfortunately, his Royal Highness had been unexpectedly called away in another direction.

"I am very sorry the Duke did not come," said he; "for I have prepared everything for his reception, as I did for his father before him, when he paid me a visit."

When we sat down to dinner also, nothing could be more amusing than the face of complacency with which the wealthy host looked down the vista of his splendid board, flanked as it was by a long array of titled and distinguished guests. The dinner was tedious and formal, well enough appointed, but there was too much of it, and the dull details were varied only by the tormenting attentions of the host, who, eating nothing himself, kept such a sharp look out upon his guest, that nothing could escape his observation.—"Lady Jane, you are doing nothing."—"Why don't you change Lord Croydon's plate—what are you about?"—"Duke, let me recommend you some of this dish."—"Sir Matthew, a glass of hock?" Thus it was during the whole dinner. Even they who, remote from the upper end of the table, might have hoped to dine in undisturbed obscurity, found themselves not

altogether exempt from persecution, although less severe than that with which the more conspicuous guests were visited. For example, a gentleman near the foot of the table had a fowl to carve, and been short-sighted, and perhaps, consequently, not very expect, bungled the matter a little. Unfortunate man! the moment he took up the knife and fork, the eagle eye of Axford was upon him, and no sooner had he made the first unskilful incision, than Axford, (who was himself the phœnix of carvers,) unable any longer to contain himself, burst forth,

"Mr. Stourbridge, pray send that fowl to the side table; Davis, take away that dish from Mr. Stourbridge and cut it up."

"Thank you, Mr. Axford," answered Stourbridge, who being a nervous gentleman, grew red in the face at his awkwardness being thus publicly commented upon. "Thank you, I can do it, I assure you, only I am rather short-sighted."

"Pray, my dear Sir—"

"I think you had better eat your dinner, Mr. Axford," suggested Lady Susan quietly; "and leave Mr. Stourbridge to carve the fowl, which, I dare say, he will do very well."

"Well, well, my dear," answered Mr. A. who, after this admonition of his wife, did not venture to press the subject, although he could not withdraw his eye from Mr. Stourbridge, who, under the horrible fancy, poor man, that the gaze of the whole table was fixed upon him, braced up his nerves, compressed his lips, and while the vein was starting from his forehead, cut his way through the fowl with desperate energy.

Very soon after the cloth was removed, the ladies retired at the signal of Lady Susan, whom a stranger could have recognized only by that motion, having sat at table among the other guests, not troubling herself and others, by doing what are called the honours, that is, pestering people to eat and drink, a practice which is only fit for, as it must have been derived from, the stable, where the grooms find it sometimes necessary to press the horses to their food.

After the retirement of the ladies, I am bound in truth, as well as gallantry to say, that a still deeper shade of dullness overspread the table. Mr. Axford and a few elderly gentlemen, who were, like himself, "landed interest," began to talk about agriculture, their improvements, and heavy politics. Two or three congenial spirits entered upon a conversation of horses, dogs, and women. An old Whig drew his

chair close to mine, and likewise began to talk politics; but there is generally this difference observable between the conversation of a country gentleman and a party man on this subject, that the former discusses measures, while the latter speaks of men. Your politician in leathers and tops, thinks the country in a bad way, as the tradesman or money dealer always complains of "these hard times;" he is apprehensive of some great impending misfortune, and has made up his mind that all the existing distress and embarrassment is owing to some one cause, probably to a capital error, which some great statesman committed many years previously, and scouts with contempt every other mode of accounting for the disorder. He denounces or approves the last act of government, or the one in agitation, accordingly as he fancies his own interest to be affected thereby. This is the staple of his politics. Your regular politician, on the contrary, treats measures merely as the instruments by which one party is to succeed or be defeated, and blames or praises their proceedings as tactical manœuvres; as to the honesty or expediency of any measure in itself, he regards them as impertinent questions, and would stare at you as an Irishman, if you were to make mention of them. He will speculate, however, with great ingenuity and subtilty upon the object of a faction, or the drift of an individual. He is full of anecdote, and a ready retailer of the last good thing which has been uttered by any of the political wits.

The old whig aforesaid, although one of those who belonged to the ministerial brigade from which I had withdrawn, addressed me with much cordiality, alluded to our little difference (for I had used some strange language in allusion to this identical individual, in the House, upon his apostasy,) as a thing which was now past and forgotten, and even had the effrontery to *palliate* my opposition, as an ebullition of youthful heat and inexperience, for which nobody would think the worse of me; consoling me with the assurance that it was already forgotten, and that if I returned to political life, my former friends would receive me as well as ever.

"My Lord," answered I, with a bow and a smile, "charity is a most christian virtue, and I am happy to find that my former friends have practised it in its highest form, by forgetting and forgiving their own peccadilloes; for charity, we are told, you know, should begin at home."

So saying, I rose from the table, leaving my whig friend to

digest my last observation; which I suppose he did easily, for your pensioned apostate has the stomach of an ostrich.

On entering the drawing-room, the first object which met my eye was Captain Axford, who had quitted the table almost immediately after the ladies, sitting with Miss Paulet on a sofa somewhat apart. It struck me that I had never before seen him look so much like a lover, and her manner also was suspicious. This was annoying again. They did not seem to notice my presence, nor, indeed, to be conscious of that of any body else. At length, young Axford looked up, and his eye met mine, and I suppose at the moment my countenance wore the cold sarcastic expression, which my friends said it was apt to assume, without my knowledge; for he, as if in imitation of me, immediately put on as cavalier a look of hauteur, as his feminine features were capable of expressing.

Having disengaged myself from the lady to whom I had been talking, I walked up to that part of the room where Miss Paulet and Captain Axford were sitting, and addressed myself to the former; upon which, the gallant Captain's vexation at having his *tête-à-tête* interrupted, could hardly be restrained by good manners from open demonstration. I still talked on, in the expectation that he would go away, but he doggedly maintained possession of his seat, although excluded from any share in the conversation between me and Miss Paulet. Observing preparations making for the dance, I asked her, but she was already engaged to Captain Axford; on receiving which answer, I bowed and retired. Axford, in short, scarcely quitted her side for five minutes during the whole evening; and the fact was commented upon to me by more than one person.

"It would be a very nice match!" said one, in a confidential tone, "and I've no doubt it is what old Axford is aiming at; his great object, you know, is connection, and the Paulets are a very high family; and they want money, I should think, of which the Axfords have abundance. Well, I hope it may take place; the son is a very fine young man, and she, I believe, as charming in mind as she is in person. Have you been staying there long?"

The evening passed off still more heavily and irksomely than the dinner, and I was much relieved when the carriages were announced. During the drive home I did not speak two words—I was too full of disgusts.

CHAPTER XLIX.

In truth, I did not recollect ever to have passed a more disagreeable evening, and I was ashamed to find how much my philosophy was disturbed—by what? a girl! If this had been prophesied to me a few weeks previously, I should have laughed it to scorn. I taxed myself with arrogance for taking offence at a young lady, because she was in love. What business was it of mine, if she had chosen to fix her affections upon an unworthy object *De gustibus non est disputandum;* and why should it not be the height of self-delusion to assume that Captain Axford is not to be named in comparison with ———?

The reader must fill up the blank.

But it suddenly occurred to me, that my visit to the Priory had been greatly prolonged, and that it would be improper for me to continue it as much as two days farther. I had been upwards of a month at Mr. Paulet's, having come with the intention to stay about a fortnight. I was a comparative stranger to the family; the Trefusis, who were their old friends, had been gone some days; and the Knaresboroughs, who were their near relatives, were to take their departure the end of the week. It would look very odd if I were to stay out them: true, indeed, that I had made a motion to take leave some time since, but had been induced to stay, at the unanimous instance of the party at the Priory. Now, however, that solicitation could not be very well repeated, and no doubt it was expected that I should soon make my adieux. Besides, it would be making myself cheap to stay so long in one house; my company might even become rather *same;* horrible thought! I will not stay out the week. If I were to linger still at the Priory, Miss Paulet might imagine that I could not tear myself away from the fascinations of her society. What! to incur the possibility of being pitied for hopeless love! Matthew Sydenham to wear the willow! Ye Gods! I must be out of the house in forty-eight hours! I laid my head on my pillow, therefore, with the determina-

tion of announcing at breakfast the morrow, my intended departure on the following day.

Fraught with this noble resolve, therefore, I joined the family at the morning meal, and took the earliest opportunity of communicating my purpose, which I did with as much coolness as was consistent with good-breeding.

The intimation, however, I had the pleasure to observe, was not received with corresponding indifference. Mr. Paulet seemed slightly surprised; Lady Jane's countenance bore marks of great surprise and regret. Miss Paulet, I thought, manifested a momentary emotion, but was instantly calm again.

Mr. Paulet did not press me to remain; but his omission to do so might, perhaps, be owing to the air of decision with which I had made known my purpose. He merely said, that he was unprepared to lose me so soon. Lady Jane, however, urged me to stay a little longer, if it were only till the end of the week; to which entreaties I forbore giving a final answer, until I saw whether they would be seconded.

But Miss Paulet did not speak a word on the subject.

I then declared that business peremptorily called me away; which, of course, precluded farther solicitation.

Even the last day I could not enjoy the society of the Paulet family free from the presence of that eternal fellow Axford, whose abominable apparition met me when I entered the morning-room, after breakfast; and whom I felt at the moment it would have been a great luxury to kick.

"I am sorry to understand that you're going to leave this neighbourhood," said he; though, as he spoke, I fancied I could read "Joy go with you!" written in his countenance.

"You cannot," answered I, "feel more regret than I do at being obliged to quit its attractions; and I could almost conceive, Captain Axford, that I envied you—unchristian and ungenerous as such a sentiment would be."

"You do me a great deal of honour, Sir Matthew," answered the young man, significantly; "and I'm not sure whether I cannot return the compliment—if it be one."

"Sir Matthew," observed Lady Jane, "sometimes speaks like an oracle—his words may bear two constructions. Alice, perhaps you can be his interpreter in the present instance?"

This appeal caused a phenomenon in Miss Paulet's face, which I had never observed before, namely, a blush; and

she made a confused answer, which was likewise uncommon with her, for, in general, she was rather good at repartee.

Next morning, firm to my purpose, my carriage was at the door, and I exchanged farewells with my friends. Those of Lady Jane and her husband were frank and warm, and expressive of genuine regret at parting, Miss Paulet, on the contrary, said little, and pressed my hand, I thought, rather coldly than otherwise.

"She is a fascinating creature, certainly!" said I, internally, as I sunk back in the carriage; "but I suspect that she acts more from principle than feeling. If so, Axford is welcome to her; for all the accomplishments under the sun form but a poor substitute for the most important of all female qualities—an affectionate heart."

CHAPTER L.

I found a strange disposition to encourage this notion of Miss Paulet's frigidity. Persons so grave, so prudent, so uniformly right, were almost necessarily of a cold calculating nature. Frankness and warm-heartedness characterized every thing that Lady Jane said or did; but Miss Paulet seemed to be always governed by reflection. True, that during my short acquaintance with her, many traits of kindness and benevolence had come under my observation, but these qualities may, and frequently do, exist in full perfection, without *the* quality, which is all in all. Thus, for the twentieth time, the affair of Axford took possession of my thoughts, and I reviewed every scene of their intercourse which I had witnessed, reflected on every word which she had spoken, as relative to him, weighed all the niceties of manner, and called to mind every species of evidence, to judge whether she was attached to this young man, although I had only just before decided that she was incapable of love! Such was my inconsistency, of which I was insensible at the time, although I laughed at it afterwards.

Upon my arrival at home I found everything as I had left it: Nicholls, however, told me a piece of news—the report was that Lord Richard Haviland was already paying his addresses to Miss Jackson, and that they were favourably received.

Upon inquiring about parochial matters, I had the satisfaction to learn that the dissensions which had distracted and disgraced the neighbourhood, under the rival ministrations of Dr. Haviland and Mr. Lanky, were now dying away under the salutary influence of a more prudent rector, and the absence of the methodistical agitator. Mrs. Chilton however was, Nicholls informed me, still in full force; her doctrines were becoming daily more fashionable in P—— and the vicinity, and she had even acquired proselytes from other parts, where her fame had penetrated.

"Ay, indeed!" said I, to this latter piece of intelligence;

"doth the old lady flourish? I am sorry to hear that knavery and folly are so prosperous."

"You are rather hard upon Mrs. Chilton, Sir Matthew," answered the steward;" "many people of irreproachable character attend her lectures, and approve of her system."

"What!" cried I, "I begin to suspect that you have been constituting yourself one of the elect: how long has the new light dawned upon you, may I ask?"

"It behoves every man *now* to look after his immortal soul, Sir Matthew; the times are portentous."

"True, and so have they been any time these three hundred years."

"But the world is grown very wicked."

"Indeed! I'm sorry to hear it, and on such respectable authority. Upon my honour, my friend, I fear that you are right; for as historians observe, in proportion as manners grow more corrupt, conversation becomes more fastidious; so likewise, I fear, that as real, unsophisticated virtue declines, externals are more rigidly sanctimonious. Since you have taken to piety, Nicholls, I shall think it highly necessary in future to inspect your accounts."

"You've an ill opinion of the world, Sir Matthew."

"And what wonder? Have you not just this moment been assuring me how devilish bad it is."

"It is not for me, Sir, to argue with you upon any subject, and still less upon this, for it is said—I hope you'll pardon me for repeating what I hear, though I positively contradict it—it is said that you are a despiser of religion."

"Because I do not sanction the mischievous extravagances of the Chiltons and the Lankies, whom I consider as the worst enemies of rational and genuine religion. I am no freethinker, Nicholls, but I dislike those professors of piety, whose practical religion I doubt, as much as I do the courage of a bully, and the virtue of a prude. Give me good deeds, and I will take the rest for granted."

So saying, I dismissed Mr. Nicholls, of whose pious propensities I then heard for the first and the last time. The threat of inspecting the accounts, no doubt, had its weight.

CHAPTER LI.

In my own home had been dull and uninteresting before my visit to Mr. Paulet's, how doubly sensible was I of its inconveniences, contrasted with the delightful house I had just quitted! In fact, before I had been forty-eight hours at Sydenham, my spirits had sunk many degrees below par.

Serious alarms, at finding my solitude thus constantly haunted by the name Emma, I set myself earnestly to devise means of repulsing its horrible visitations. But I was soon too forcibly convinced, that I had to encounter another, and a still more formidable enemy, one whose approaches I had latterly begun to fear, although I endeavoured by every possible argument to persuade myself that my apprehensions were groundless,—an enemy who, in the pride of my heart, I had believed would never even have dared to assault, far less have succeeded in vanquishing me. The sagacious reader has, perhaps, some pages back, perceived the advance of this mighty foe, whose form now became so palpable, that I myself could no longer deny it. Need I mention the dreaded name of the tyrant—Love! But in sober sadness, I was not fully aware beyond the possibility of doubt of the state of my heart, until I had been a week at Sydenham. It was useless to create a struggle against the truth, which everything conspired to press upon me with overwhelming conviction. Wherever I might be, or whatever might be my ostensible employment, the image of Aline Paulet occupied my mind. Not in the actual enjoyment of her society, I had admired her as a most accomplished and amiable being, but now, removed from her presence, my imagination adorned her with more than the perfections of humanity, elevating her into an object of idolatry, rather than human admiration. Before I left the Priory, I was conscious of being somewhat smitten with this charming girl, but I never dreamed that I was so far committed as I found myself to be after a week's absence. In a word, I found myself in such a condition, that I could not endure the idea of Miss Paulet being devoted to another.

With infinitely deeper anxiety than before, I now reflected

upon every particular of her conduct with regard to young Axford, and inexpressible was my relief, when I persuaded myself that it did not, by any means, afford conclusive evidence of her being attached to that person, although I felt satisfied that he was under the influence of a passion for her. I trembled, however, lest he should eventually succeed, and for the first time in my life, doubtfully instituted a comparison between my personal recommendations, and those of another individual. Upon any other occasion, when my feelings were less seriously engaged, I should have feared little from such a rival; but now, so low was the pride of my heart reduced, that I was scarcely satisfied of my own superiority over this young man. But this care disposed of, another most interesting question presented itself to my mind, namely, whether Alice Paulet was obnoxious to the charge of coldness which I had imputed to her? As to this point, I was left, after all, in a painful state of uncertainty, although I caught at every circumstance which had a tendency to prove the negative. Admitting, however, that she was acquitted of this fatal charge, the next most interesting point was, did there exist any evidence of her having any incipient regard for myself? How diligently did I collect together every incident, every word, every look, every expression of manner which could give countenance to such a delightful probability. My young readers, who are awakened to the passion of youth, do you recognize in these details all, or any of the symptoms which you yourselves have experienced, or are at this moment suffering? They only who have known them, can comprehend the emotions of which the above is but a dull and dry statement.

I felt, indeed, too surely, that Benedict's occupation was gone. To struggle against my fate, I knew, was useless, and indeed I had neither the spirit nor the inclination to make the attempt. I will not dwell farther upon the alternations of hope, fear, and doubt, which I underwent; for though this was to myself the most important passage of my life, I am quite aware that such details may be very uninteresting to the reader.

To remain as I was, without making any movement relative to this affair in which my happiness was thus irretrievably involved, I felt to be intolerable; yet what measure to take I knew not. To return to the Priory was impossible; what pretext could I use? To leave the game in Axford's hands, was a thought which drove me to distraction; for even supposing there existed no partiality on Miss Paulet's side, a

large presumption not altogether warranted,—might not his devoted assiduities at length succeed, since love is the most fertile generator of itself? Was there not, besides, every adventitious inducement for her acquiescence? And the words of the man whom I had met at the father's house recurred to me in their full force: it was what the world calls *a good match*—it was desirable that she, an orphan, should be settled, and doubtless, the suffrages of her family would be in favour of this young man, who was, besides, a personal favourite with them. I acquitted her indeed of being actuated by the views of expediency, which usually govern young ladies in these matters; but might she not marry Captain Axford without any compromise of that disinterested purity for which I gave her credit? His character, person, and manners, were unobjectionable; he was heir to a large estate which adjoined that of her brother, so that there would be the additional temptation of settling close to her own family, who were so dear to her, and by whom she was so much beloved. The wonder now was, under all the circumstances, that she had not already been committed to this young man, with whom she had been on terms of intimate acquaintance before she had seen my face. Perhaps her affections had been withered by an early disappointment, a conjecture which the gravity of her manners, and her presumed indifference to Axford as a lover, seemed to countenance. This probability struck me as having more character than any which I had previously framed. Here were my hopes again attacked from a new quarter; in short, I must again leave it to the experienced reader, to judge of my state of mind.

Surrounded with difficulties, as my passion thus seemed to be, and persuaded, as I was, that its successful event was essential to my future happiness, reflection sometimes sunk me into the depths of despondency, when I resolved to abandon it in despair, and at other times raised me to the pinnacle of hope, determining me to prosecute it with inextinguishable ardour, and undaunted perseverance. But again how to begin? There was the perplexing question. If I were to wait until I met them in town in the spring, it might be to address her as Mrs. Axford; and until they removed to London, I knew that they purposed remaining at the Priory.

Thus situated, and while I was devising various schemes for the accomplishment of my object, a paragraph in a newspaper instantly relieved me from my embarrassment. It was an advertisement of a hunting-seat to be let, in the county of D——, three miles distant from the little watering-place,

where Cheselden was sojourning. My resolution was taken without a moment's pause. D—— was a great hunting county, and under cover of this sport, I could pursue other game of much deeper interest and importance. I rang the bell, and desired Nicholls to be sent to me *instanter*. As soon as the steward made his appearance, I handed him the newspaper, and pointing out the advertisement,—"You will go down to the agent of this place," said I, "immediately, and engage, and have it ready for my reception by this day week. You must not even wait to pack up your shirts, for the place may be gone if we lose an hour."

"But," answered Nicholls, who did not go along with me in this impetuous mode of doing business, "what is the limit of the terms, Sir Matthew?"

"Terms! damn terms! give him anything he asks; agree to anything, and on no account come away without securing it."

"Very well, Sir Matthew," answered the steward, evidently a little surprised at my impetuosity, to which he was altogether unaccustomed; "your orders shall be obeyed; although," he added smiling, "I did not think, Sir, you were so keen a sportsman."

"Away with you, man, and don't stand talking; send down to P—— for a chaise and horses—but stay, that will waste time; you may take the old yellow chariot, and the thoroughbreds the first stage. For Heaven's sake mind what I say, and use all despatch, for I'm in earnest."

Nicholls, who was a prudent man, said no more, than that he would not leave the carriage until he had arrived at his destination, and then, with a significant expression of countenance, as if he suspected that there was more in this than met the ear, bowed and withdrew.

My next care was to summon the man who had long managed my father's stud, and who still held the place of head groom, though now almost a sinecure, my hunting establishment being on a small scale, for I cared little about that animating diversion. However, as I was taking this place for the ostensible purpose of enjoying the chase, it was absolutely necessary that I should occasionally show myself in the field. Accordingly, I gave the necessary instructions to the old groom aforesaid, whose countenance brightened at the thoughts of again presiding over a good stable, and who could not help congratulating me on the resumption of a sport, my neglect of which, had, I fear, caused him to entertain a mean opinion of my character.

CHAPTER LII.

I WROTE to Mr. Paulet, apprizing him of what I had done; and the return of the post brought me a letter from him, expressive of his pleasure, and that of his circle, at the prospect of so soon seeing me again; and informing me that Pine Lodge, the name of my new residence, was a very pretty place, and only a quarter of an hour's ride from his house. At the same time, also, I heard from Nicholls, whose despatch contained the satisfactory intelligence that he had concluded the bargain, and that he was superintending the arrangements for my taking immediate possession of the house.

It was with mingled feelings of hope and joy, anxiety and fear, that I found myself on the road, which, six weeks ago, I had traversed with a presentiment of all the happiness which, to a certain extent, had since been realized; for I had not calculated upon the cares and possible misery which that transient happiness had entailed. The idea, however, that I should within a few hours be in *her* presence (for I was engaged to dine at the Priory on the day of my arrival), was sufficient to exhilarate my spirits. "May she be free!" was my earnest aspiration. That was all I required; for though well aware that I had no common person to deal with, and that qualities and exertion would be requisite for this conquest, which were not essential to the achievement for others, I felt happily sensible that I was neither unapt nor unprovided for such enterprises; I ventured to hope, therefore, without presumption, that by devoting the whole energies of my mind to this undertaking, I might be conscious of a reasonable chance of success.

I know not whether poets and novelists are generally correct, in representing carelessness with respect to attire, as a symptom or effect of love; but certainly, my case was an exception to the rule, for, though I cannot say that this passion rendered me more studious of my dress, to which I was accustomed to pay as much attention as seemed to me befitting a gentleman; yet, assuredly, I did not find that it caused

me to neglect the sit of my coat, the tie of my cravat, or the adjustment of my hair. Indeed, I felt disposed to regret just then, that nature had been less bountiful to me in personal endowments, perhaps, than in other particulars. My features, I am sorry to confess, though sufficiently well-looking, are not positively handsome—at least, none ever ventured to pronounce them so; except, perhaps, an occasional matron or her daughter. My countenance, however, was allowed to be very intelligent, and was said, as I have before mentioned, to assume with facility a sarcastic expression. As to my person, it did not exceed, if it reached, the middle standard; slight, but well-formed. Some supposed that my air had considerable elegance; all admitted that it was eminently gentlemanlike. Such, my fair readers, is the portrait of Matthew Sydenham; he would perhaps have not delayed so long the gratification of your curiosity with respect to this important point, had he been enabled to boast of great external attractions; for he is not ignorant of the first question which ye ask, touching any individual of the other sex, who becomes in any way an object of interest to you—"Is he handsome?"

My return was welcomed by the Paulets with flattering kindness. "I am thankful to any cause," said Lady Jane, "that brings you back among us; though I fear, after all, we shall not benefit much by your residence in our neighbourhood; for, of course, you'll be so entirely engrossed with your hunting, that we can hardly expect that your visits here will be frequent."

There was some sort of arch malice in these words, I thought, judging from the manner with which they were uttered, and the glance at her sister-in-law which accompanied them.

"Oh!" answered I, carelessly, though I believe not without some confusion, "I assure you I am not so ardent a sportsman, and I think you will find that this house will generally offer me more attractions than the field."

"I hope it may prove so," rejoined Lady Jane; "but I will candidly tell you, from an *esprit du corps*, I don't like fox-hunters, whom we consider as our natural enemies."

"I pray you not to class me with any such barbarians; and I think it not quite generous of you to suspect my allegiance, of which, I think, I have given so many unequivocal proofs."

"I'm glad to hear it," answered the lively lady; "for I

should be sorry that you should be spoiled by becoming a sportsman."

"I fear," answered I, as I offered her my arm to go to the dining-room, "I fear that I am in worse danger of being spoiled by your kindness."

We sat down a *partie quarrée*, the Duke and Duchess of Knaresborough having left the Priory on the previous day. In the course of conversation, I took an early opportunity of alluding to the Axfords, in the hope of eliciting something new with respect to that member of the family whose movements were now a matter of so much interest to me.

"George Axford," said Lady Jane, "has been here every day—has he not, Alice?—since you went away, to console us, I suppose, for your loss. Indeed, he speaks very handsomely of you, though I don't think he discovered half your perfections until you were gone, for he did not seem very sensible to them, while you were here. What is your opinion of him, Sir Matthew?"

"My opinion? Oh, I hardly know; I have had very few opportunities of judging; but he seems to be a good kind of young man."

"Oh severe sentence! and with what a mortifying air of indifference and superiority pronounced! Well, if I belonged to your noble sex, I would rather have anything said of me, than that I was a good kind of young man."

"I can only speak to the extent of my experience; it is for you, who are better acquainted with him, to instruct me as to his good qualities, which I am perfectly willing to believe on your authority."

"Oh, I'm no reader of characters," answered Lady Jane; "but Alice is, so perhaps she can enlighten us upon the subject."

"How can you," said Miss Paulet, with a laugh, evidently to hide her confusion, for my attention was riveted upon her answer, although I did not seem to take particular notice of it—"Jane, how can you ask such foolish questions? I believe we are all equally well acquainted with Captain Axford, and neither of us know anything to his disadvantage."

This reply was certainly as flat and unmeaning as it could well be; nevertheless it gave me some uneasiness, which was not diminished by Mr. Paulet's observation, "That Axford was a very fine young man, of most amiable character, and agreeable manners; he was a person generally liked."

"I was only joking, St. Leger," said Lady Jane, perceiving, with the delicate acumen of a woman, the scarcely visible disapprobation in her husband's manner, of her mode of alluding to their friend; "George Axford is indeed well worthy of being the general favourite which he is."

No farther remark was made upon this subject, but what had been said was sufficient, in my state of mind, to send me home in considerable dissatisfaction.

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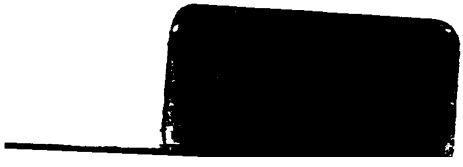

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